BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

DISSERTATION

THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

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submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

1969

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(Order No. ________)

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Christocentrism, the interpretation of life and history from the perspective of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, determines Bonhoeffer's social philosophy. Bonhoeffer believes that sociality has its origins in man's spirituality. Consequently he derives the norms for evaluating historical man and society from the pure forms of sociality as they existed in pre-history between Creation and Fall.

Ethical transcendence, the absolute distinction between God and man, establishes the I-Thou relation as the basic social category from which Bonhoeffer derives the concept of person and community. However, the person as ultimate unit is real only in sociality.

Bonhoeffer distinguishes between community willed by God and society willed by men. Community and society are collective persons having an objective spirit through which individuals experience their collective person. In Bonhoeffer's view only the objective spirit of the community has moral character and is thus an ethical person. Bonhoeffer's social philosophy, based on the interdependence of individual and social being, may be termed "organic pluralism."

The Fall, the destruction of the unity of sociality and spirituality in man's original communion with God, marks the beginning of history. Its central event is God's revelation in Jesus Christ who reconciled God and the world and established the new mankind as the church. The essential church, the _corpus Christi_, is Bonhoeffer's norm for sociality in history.

Bonhoeffer's Christocentrism provides the foundation of his social philosophy in these key notions: vicarious action based on Christ's vicarious action for mankind; the oneness of reality derived from Christ's role as mediator between God and world; and finally, the concreteness of revelation as orders of preservation or mandates in the world.

Based on the Christian's freedom as a creature of God, vicarious action as responsibility to God and men determines Bonhoeffer's view of the Christian's rights and duties in the world. The Christian life is ordered by the divine mandates of marriage and family, labor, government, and church. The mandates as the concrete forms of God's commandment and as divine commissions exhibit within themselves the relation of authority and obedience and, among each other, the relation of mutual cooperation and limitation. The mandates are functional orders which may be dissolved when they fail to serve Christ's new order of God in the world. The _summum bonum_ and absolute criterion for

Christian thought and action, individually and collectively, is responsibility to Christ.

Bonhoeffer's social philosophy has been compiled from his writings prior to his imprisonment. Bonhoeffer's prison letters do not invalidate his social philosophy since they reaffirm in the notion of autonomous man's responsible action in the world come of age the central theme of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy: life as responsibility.

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INTRODUCTION

Only a small circle of persons knew Bonhoeffer at the time of his execution by the Nazis shortly before the end of World War II. Today Bonhoeffer's name is well known to many people of all faiths. Primarily he is known as the author of a series of challenging letters from prison. He is even more widely known for his controversial and somewhat enigmatic notions of "world come of age" and "religionless Christianity." Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer's close friend, states in his Tuthill Lectures: " Bonhoeffer now transcends boundaries as vigorously as he confined himself to his own spiritual and bodily roots."[1] What were those roots which nourished and sustained the man Bonhoeffer in life and death? A brief sketch of Bonhoeffer's life should suffice to indicate those influences which were mainly responsible for Bonhoeffer's spiritual and intellectual development.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born on February 4,1906. He was raised in a large upper middle-class family deeply rooted in Christian, humanitarian and liberal traditions.

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[1] Eberhard Bethge, "The Challenge of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Life and Theology," World Come of Age, comp. R. G. Smith (London: Collins,1967), p. 23.

It was the spirit of these traditions that determined his life; and it was the feeling of having "ground under his feet" which gave Bonhoeffer inner strength and security. Bonhoeffer used the notion of having "ground under his feet", derived from the myth of Antaeus, several times in his writings to stress his constant theme: unity of thought and action.

The confinement and the solitude of the prison cell, however, was that which made Bonhoeffer feel very keenly the close bonds with his family and other people. Writing to his parents he acknowledged with gratitude the strong family ties. "What a blessing it is in such times as this to belong to a large and closely-knit family where each trusts the other and stands by him."[1] In another letter Bonhoeffer frankly admitted:

> In times like these we learn as never before what it means to possess a past and a spiritual heritage untrammeled by the changes and chances of the present. A spiritual heritage reaching back for centuries is a wonderful support and comfort in face of all temporary stresses and strains.[2]

The family heritage instilled Bonhoeffer with a strong conservative tendency. He identified himself with the values of the Christian bourgeoisie. In praise of this class Bonhoeffer began to write a novel which was to be, as he confided to a friend, " a rehabilitation of middle class life as we have known it in our families, and especially in the light of the Christian religion."[1] Another indication of Bonhoeffer's adherence to the past was his preoccupation with nineteenth century Germany, particularly its literature. "Hardly anyone has the slightest idea what was achieved during the last century by our own grandfathers . . . I believe people will one day be utterly amazed at the fertility of that age, now so much despised and so little known."[2]

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[1] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, ed. E. Bethge, trans. R.H. Fuller (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 56.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

In addition to family influences, chthonian forces greatly contributed to the formation of Bonhoeffer's personality. The best characterization is given by himself when he claims that not the mountains or the sea but the hills fit his nature. "It is the hills of central Germany, the Harz Mountains, the Thuringian forest, the Weserberge, which belong to me, and have made me what I am."[3] Transferring the nature-metaphor into the sociological realm, Bonhoeffer conceded: "So perhaps my midland hills are bourgeois, in the sense of what is natural, not too high, modest and self-satisfied, nonideological, content with concrete realities, and above all not given to self-advertisement."[4]

Bonhoeffer studied theology in Tübingen and Berlin; he concluded his study with the thesis The Communion of Saints in 1927. The sociology of Weber, the philosophy of Nietzsche,

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[1] Ibid., p. 86. [2] Ibid., p. 81. [3] Ibid., p. 134.
[4] Ibid., p. 135.

Dilthey, and Simmel, together with the teaching of the liberal theologians, left their marks on the young Bonhoeffer. Bethge notes about this period of Bonhoeffer's intellectual development:

> These were the formative influences of Bonhoeffer's contemporaries: Troeltsch's interest in the sociological realities of Christianity, Holl's reawakening of the genuine Luther, Harnack's intellectual incorruptibility, and Seeberg's philosophical openness.[1]

Bonhoeffer, after serving as a pastor in Barcelona and studying for a year at Union Theological Seminary in New York, began his academic career at Berlin University. In 1931 Bonhoeffer presented his inaugural dissertation Act and Being which was strongly influenced by the thought of Barth. Of Bonhoeffer's lectures, only Creation and Fall, delivered in the winter-semester 1932-1933, has been preserved; while his lectures on Christology, delivered in the summer-semester 1933, has been reconstructed from student notes by E. Bethge under the titles: Christology (in England) and Christ the Center (in the United States).

Besides lecturing, Bonhoeffer served as a student chaplain and worked with and gave religious instruction to a group of teenagers in one of the worst slum districts in Berlin. In addition, Bonhoeffer enthusiastically participated in the ecumenical movement. However, this effort to promote peace and international understanding was thwarted in Germany when Hitler came to power.

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[1] Bethge, p.28.

Bonhoeffer immediately voiced his opposition to National Socialism. In protest against the development in the church in Germany, Bonhoeffer left for London in October 1933 to minister as a pastor to two German-speaking congregations. During his stay in England Bonhoeffer took an active part in the building of the Confessional Church in Germany. Bonhoeffer ardently supported the Confessional Church in its struggle against the regime and the Reichskirche, and uncompromisingly spoke for the Confessional Church in the ecumenical movement.

Bonhoeffer returned to Germany in order to establish and direct a seminary (Bruderhaus) for young ministers of the Confessional Church. It was from the seminary at Finkenwalde that Bonhoeffer vigorously participated in the church struggle and made his stand absolutely clear. Here Bonhoeffer wrote the two books which were published during his lifetime. In The Cost of Discipleship the central theme was how to live a Christian life in the modern world; while Life Together is an account of the life of a Christian community as exemplified by the life in the Bruderhaus at Finkenwalde. The brief Bible study Temptation, published posthumously, was also written during this time. Bonhoeffer also resumed his lectures at Berlin University until the revocation of his venia legendi in 1936. The Bruderhaus was first closed down in 1937; it was dissolved finally in 1940.

About 1938, Bonhoeffer came into contact with the German resistance movement which attempted to overthrow the Nazi regime. This association was to affect profoundly Bonhoeffer's life and thought. Influenced by his experiences in England and America, Bonhoeffer had developed strong pacifist leanings. When in 1935 conscription had been introduced in Germany, Bonhoeffer was determined not to take up arms. In 1939, when war was imminent, Bonhoeffer accepted an invitation to lecture in the United States. He was well aware that his friends hoped to spare him from a crucial decision involving a conflict of loyalties; namely, whether to serve in the armed forces of Germany and betray his pacifist convictions, or refuse to serve and thus turn against his own country.

The entries in Bonhoeffer's diary reveal his doubt and inner conflict concerning his stay in the safety of the United States. On June 22, 1939, Bonhoeffer wrote: "To be here during a catastrophe is absolutely unthinkable, were it not destined to be so. But to be partly to blame for it, to be forced to reproach oneself for it is absolutely annihilating."[1] Bonhoeffer resolved his conflict by deciding to return home. In a letter to R. Niebuhr he explained:

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[1] "Während einer Katastrophe hier zu sein, ist einfach undenkbar, wenn es nicht so gefügt wird. Aber selbst daran schuld zu sein, sich selbst Vorwürfe machen zu müssen, ist gewiss vernichtend." (translation mine)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Erster Band: Ökumene, hrsg. E. Bethge (4 Bände. München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1958), p.306.

> I have come to the conclusion that I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people . . . Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their own nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose; but I cannot make that choice in security.[1]

Bonhoeffer, clearly recognizing the possible consequences of his decision, wrote in his diary: "Since I have been aboard ship, the inner discord concerning the future has come to an end." [2] Two months later World War II began.

Years later, recalling his decision, Bonhoeffer wrote from his prison cell:

> I have not for a moment regretted coming home in 1939. I knew quite well what I was about, and acted with a clear conscience. I have no desire to cross out of my life anything that has happened since, either in the world at large, or to me personally . . . And I regard my sitting here . . . as my own part in the fate of Germany.[3]

Bethge comments on this period in Bonhoeffer's life:

> The retreat in 1933 was undertaken because he would no longer serve a church corrupted by the new privileges; but he came back to serve an unprivileged,

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[1] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Gesammelte Schriften, I,320, citing Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Death of a Martyr," Christianity and Crisis(June,1945).

[2] Ibid., I, p.315. "Seit ich auf dem Schiff bin, hat die innere Entzweiung über die Zukunft aufgehört." (translation mine).

[3] Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, pp.118-19.

> outcast church. The retreat in 1939 was undertaken because he could not serve a fatherland heading towards war; but he came back to serve a fatherland of the past and of the future. Both times it meant losing his good name and stepping into anonymity, the first time being branded as an instigator, the second time being ostracized as a traitor. 1

In the following years until his arrest on April 5, 1943, Bonhoeffer combined the work for the Confessional Church with his activities for the resistance movement. Little is known about Bonhoeffer's life during this time. When he visited Barth and Visser't Hooft in Switzerland and Bishop Bell of Chichester in Sweden Bonhoeffer made it clear that he was working for the defeat of his own country. "Our action must be such," Bonhoeffer said to Bishop Bell, "as the world will understand as an action of repentance."[2] During these war years Bonhoeffer worked on his Ethics, the intended magnum opus of his life; it was published unfinished in 1949.

Following his arrest Bonhoeffer was imprisoned at the Tegel Prison in Berlin. It was the moving poem: "Wer bin ich?" (Who am I?) which more than anything else written during his confinement reveals Bonhoeffer's anxieties and also his unshakeable faith in God. "In every way," he wrote to his parents, "life in prison makes one return to the simplest things in life."[3] An uncertain fate and the stresses and strains of

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[1] Bethge, p. 48.

[2] Bonhoeffer, Gesammelte Schriften, I, 395, citing G. K. A. Bell, "The Background of the Hitler Plot," The Contemporary Review (October,1945).

[3] Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, p.53.

life in prison in a city enduring heavy air raids did not break Bonhoeffer's spirit. His courage, unselfishness, and helpfulness was a consolation and an inspiration to his fellow prisoners. His strength of character commanded the respect and gained the confidence of his warders. It was only with the help of his guards that Bonhoeffer could carry on his correspondence with the outside world. "Much as I long to be out of here, I don't believe a single day has been wasted. What will come out of my time here it is too early to say. But something is bound to come out of it."[1] Bonhoeffer's writings from the prison cell were edited and published by E. Bethge under the titles: Prisoner for God and Letters and Papers from Prison.

The theological problem raised and the possible solutions hinted at or provided for in these letters were to become Bonhoeffer's legacy to the theological world. Besides theological questions, Bonhoeffer discussed a wide variety of subjects belonging to the liberal as well as fine arts. But his main concern was the future, the development after the war. Assessing his own generation after ten years of National Socialism, Bonhoeffer wrote:

> Thinking and acting for the sake of the coming generation, but taking each day as it comes without fear and anxiety - that is the spirit in which we are being forced to live in practice. It is not easy to be brave and hold out, but it is imperative.[2]

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 69. [2] *Ibid*., p. 32.

It was in this spirit that Bonhoeffer accepted his imprisonment and claimed: "The charge of which I would be condemned is so unobjectionable that I should actually be proud of it."[1] Bonhoeffer fervently hoped for the success of the German resistance to bring about the collapse of the Third Reich. This hope was shattered when the attempt on Hitler's life failed. Bethge, the recipient of most of Bonhoeffer's letters from prison, remembers: "The failure of the plot was a dreadful blow for Bonhoeffer, but he met it with renewed dedication to the service of his people and with steadfast determination to bear all the consequences and the additional pain."[2]

In the course of the investigation into the conspiracy leading to the events of July 20, 1944, Bonhoeffer was transferred to the main Gestapo Prison. His contacts with the outside world were reduced to a few messages; they stopped completely in February, 1945. Bonhoeffer's last places of imprisonment were the concentration camps of Buchenwald, Schönberg, and Flossenbürg. On April 9, 1945, without ever being tried and only a few days before the camp was liberated, Bonhoeffer was executed by hanging.

The most succinct account of Bonhoeffer's change from passive to active opposition to National Socialism is again given by Bethge who writes:

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 87. [2] _Ibid._, p. 12.

> First, Bonhoeffer resisted, wrote, and spoke as a churchman against anti-Semitism, disappointed with his own society's reaction, very much hoping for his church to speak out. But the voice of the church slowly became hoarse. Secondly, Bonhoeffer considered giving his testimony as an individual pacifist in the realm of conscientious objection. Here, though fighting for an understanding in his own church he realistically never dared to hope for the cover of that tradition-bound church. Finally, he sacrified himself quite differently, as a German, as a member of the bourgeoisie, as a Christian, in order to pay the overdue price for the guilt of his class and nation, without asking for ecclesiastical protection any more.[1]

Looking back at his own life Bonhoeffer wrote one year before his death: "I am convinced that my life has followed a straight and even course . . . It has been an uninterrupted enrichment of my experience, for which I can only be thankful."[2]

A deep faith in Christ as the center of all life and an equally deep feeling for having "ground under his feet" were the roots from which Bonhoeffer derived the confidence and strength of his convictions and actions for which he was willing to risk and accept the supreme sacrifice. His actions exemplified his thoughts. Bonhoeffer's premature death prevented him from finishing what he began. Bonhoeffer's thought remained fragmentary; but his life as a whole serves as the focal point in which the fragments are united.

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[1] Bethge, p. 69.

[2] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 158.

PART I

THE FOUNDATION OF BONHOEFFER'S SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER I

BONHOEFFER'S CHRISTOLOGY

Introduction

Any study concerned with the place and function of Christianity in contemporary society cannot omit a reference to a man who over twenty years ago anticipated in his letters from a Nazi prison the present predicament of Christianity. This man was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Writing as a theologian, deeply concerned with and involved in the affairs of his time, Bonhoeffer's letters reveal a critical evaluation and a serious indictment of Christianity. Traditional Christianity, Bonhoeffer claimed, has become irrelevant for modern man. What is Bonhoeffer's significance today? Is his Christian social philosophy still meaningful for contemporary man?

At the outset it should be noted that the following exposition of the key ideas in Bonhoeffer's christological, ecclesiological and historical writings up to and including his Ethics serves to establish the foundation on which Bonhoeffer bases his Christian social philosophy. However, from the point of view of social philosophy the distinction between the terms "Christianity" and "Church" must be clearly established.

The notion "Christianity" is regarded by Ernst Troeltsch as a product of the Enlightenment and the following religious and philosophical development. Troeltsch claims:

> A social philosophy of Christianity exists only as historically given and conditioned teachings of the great churches, in which the solutions found by Christian antiquity are continued, modified and adapted to new situations; social philosophy does not exist as a unified outgrowth of Christianity which in itself is difficult to define.[1]

In contrast to Troeltsch, Bonhoeffer maintains that the church cannot be adequately described in sociological terms. The church is not a "religious community of worshippers of Christ but it is Christ Himself who has taken form among men."[2]

The present investigation, therefore, is solely concerned with Christianity as embodied in the church, i.e., the church as one among the many institutions of society, and the teaching of the church as it affects its members in leading a Christian life in the world. Consequently, only those aspects of Bonhoeffer's theological arguments which contribute fundamentally to his view of the role of the church will be taken into consideration.

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[1] "Eine Sozialphilosophie des Christentums gibt es nur als historisch gegebene und bedingte Lehre der grossen Kirchenkörper, in denen die von der christlichen Antike gefundenen Lösungen fortgesetzt, abgewandelt und neuen Lagen angepasst werden; es gibt sie aber nicht als einheitlichen Ausfluss des überhaupt schwer bestimmbaren Christentums an sich." Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Sozialphilosophie des Christentums* (Zürich: Verlag Seldwyla, 1922), p.13.

[2] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. by E. Bethge and trans. by N. H. Smith (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), p. 83.

The key to Bonhoeffer's thought is his Christology, extending like the thread of Ariadne from his first work to the last letters from prison. Christocentrism, therefore, makes Bonhoeffer's social philosophy a Christ-centered, truly "Christian" social philosophy. In order to understand Bonhoeffer's social philosophy, it is essential to elucidate, first, Bonhoeffer's Christology.

Christology and the Church

The quest for the presence of Christ is the ever recurring theme of Bonhoeffer's Christology. In his first work, The Communion of Saints, the discussion of the Fall and man's broken community with God leads Bonhoeffer to distinguish between the *peccatorum communio* and the *sanctorum communio*. The community of sinners is the old mankind of Adam for which Jesus Christ atoned. Through Christ's vicarious life and death for all men God and men were reconciled in the community of saints, the new mankind of Christ, the church. The church is the real presence of Christ in the world. Vicarious action distinguishes the new mankind of Christ from the old mankind of Adam. Concerning the relationship between Christ and the new mankind, the church, Bonhoeffer notes: "Not religion, but revelation, not a religious community, but the church;

that is what the reality of Jesus Christ means."[1]

Christology and the World

Bonhoeffer elaborates on his notion of the reality of Christ by referring to the concreteness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. God is not only other than man, Bonhoeffer asserts, God is also free for historical man. "God is not free *of* man, but *for* man. Christ," Bonhoeffer claims, "is the Word of his freedom."[2]

The church, the reality and presence of Christ on earth, proclaims the Word of God to the world. The church, Bonhoeffer insists, must relate the concreteness and authority of the message of Christ to the affairs of contemporary life. "The word of the church is the word of the present Christ, it is gospel and commandment."[3]

Besides the notion of vicarious action, the cross of Jesus Christ is another important element in Bonhoeffer's quest for the presence of Christ in the world. In a speech in Gland, Bonhoeffer implored his listeners:

> And now place the cross into a disintegrating world. Christ is not far from the world, not a world apart from the region of our existence. He experienced

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[1] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Communion of Saints* A Dogmatic Inquiry into the Sociology of the Church, trans. by R. G. Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 112.

[2] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, trans. by B. Noble (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 90.

> the lowest depths of our world, his cross is in the midst of the world.[1]

In his lectures on Christology, given in the 1933 summer semester at Berlin University, deals explicitly with the person of Jesus Christ. Discussing the present Christ, Bonhoeffer maintains: "This one, whole, person, the God-man Jesus Christ, is present in the church in his *pro me* structure as Word, as sacrament and as community."[2] Furthermore, speaking of the place of Christ, Bonhoeffer asserts that Christ is the center of human existence, of history and also of nature. Christ is thus the mediator between God and His creation.

The central theme of Bonhoeffer's Christology: Christ is present only in his church, finds its most extreme and controversial expression during the struggle between the Confessing Church and the Reichskirche. Bonhoeffer insists:

> *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (There is no salvation *outside the church*). The question about the community of the church is the question about the community of salvation. The boundaries of the church are the boundaries of salvation. Whoever separates

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[1] "Und nun stellt das Kreuz hinein in die aus den Fugen geratene Welt. Christus ist nicht fern von der Welt, nicht in einer weltfernen Region unseres Daseins, er ging in die tiefste Tiefe der Welt, sein Kreuz ist mitten in der Welt." *Gesammelte Schriften*, I, p. 168. (translation mine)

[2] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, introduced by E. H. Robertson and trans. by John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 49.

himself knowingly from the Confessing Church in Germany, separates himself from salvation.[1]

Christology and Imitatio Christi

This uncompromising Christology determines completely the answer Bonhoeffer provides in The Cost of Discipleship, namely, to the question how to lead a Christian life in the modern world. Against the cheap grace of his contemporary church Bonhoeffer proclaims the costly grace of an exclusive adherence to Christ and the sharing in his vicarious suffering. "Christ calls, the disciple follows; that is grace and commandment in one."[2] The call of Christ demands absolute obedience. "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die . . . because only the man who is dead to his own will can follow Christ."[3]

Bonhoeffer's theory of the Christian life in the modern world, characterized by the disciple's total commitment to Jesus Christ, became an actual experience in the experiment of the Bruderhaus as later reported in the small book Life Together.

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[1] "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus. Die Frage nach der Kirchengemeinschaft ist die Frage nach der Heilsgemeinschaft. Die Grenzen der Kirche sind die Grenzen des Heils. Wer sich wissentlich von der Bekennenden Kirche in Deutschland trennt, trennt sich vom Heil." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Die Frage nach der Kirchengemeinschaft," reprinted in Die mündige Welt, Vol. I, pp. 123-38, (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1955), p. 138.

[2] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, trans. by R. H. Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 63.

[3] Ibid., p. 99.

Christology and Christ's Lordship

A shift in emphasis in Bonhoeffer's Christology becomes evident in the fragmentary writings which comprise his Ethics. Though Christ remains the center of Bonhoeffer's thought, the presence of Christ is not any longer restricted to the church but encompasses the whole of the world. Christ is the center of life. Comparing The Cost of Discipleship with the Ethics, Bethge writes:

> The exclusiveness of Christ - that is the claim of The Cost of Discipleship. The expansiveness of Christ's totality - that is the new departure. Exclusiveness leading to the self-contained ghetto - that was the danger of the first, but legitimately it leads into the comprehending encounter with reality, with history, and gives full right to secularization.[1]

Four different approaches, Bethge believes, can be discerned in Bonhoeffer's attempt to deal with the problem of Christian ethics.

The first approach shows a strong adherence to the thoughts expressed in The Cost of Discipleship. Against the anti-Christian forces of his time Bonhoeffer reiterates Christ's claim to exclusiveness and totality by citing passages of the New Testament: "He that is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:40) and "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30).[2]

The second approach, "Ethics as Formation," Bonhoeffer describes as "the bold endeavour to speak about the way in which the form of Jesus Christ takes form in our world."[1] This is the historical responsibility of the church as the Body of Christ in the world. "It is to this world that the Church must now prove that Christ is the living Lord."[2]

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[1] Bethge, p. 70. [2] Ethics, p. 57.

The Lordship of Christ finds its clearest expression in the third approach, i.e., in Bonhoeffer's distinction between the "ultimate" and the "penultimate"; or as Bethge comments: "The structure of the ultimate and the penultimate represents the Christological order."[3] The relation between the ultimate and the penultimate, Bonhoeffer claims, can be found only in Jesus Christ. "In Christ the reality of God meets the reality of the world . . . Christian life is participation in the encounter of Christ with the world."[4]

Concerning the world Bonhoeffer points out the difference between the "natural" and the "unnatural." He defines the natural as "that which after the Fall, is directed towards the coming of Christ. The unnatural is that which, after the Fall, closes its doors against the coming of Christ."[5] Bonhoeffer elucidates further: "It is only through the coming of Christ that the natural is confirmed in its character as penultimate, and that the unnatural is exposed once and for all as destruction of the penultimate."[6]

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[1] Ibid., p. 88. [2] Ibid., p. 109. [3] Bethge, p. 72.
[4] Ethics, p. 133. [5] Ibid., p. 144. [6] Ibid. , p. 144.

The dominant theme of the fourth approach is Bonhoeffer's notion of reality. "God is the ultimate reality," Bonhoeffer declares, and "the apprehension of this reality . . . is the crucial-turning point in the apprehension of reality as a whole."[1] There are not two realities, the reality of God and the reality of the world, but only one: the self-revelation of God as ultimate reality in Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer writes:

> Just as in Christ the reality of God entered into the reality of the world, so, too, is that which is Christian to be found only in that which is of the world, the 'supernatural' only in the natural, the holy only in the profane, and the revelational only in the rational.[2]

As Bethge observes: "The oneness of the reality established by Christ's entering is not a synthesis and not a diastasis, . . . but the biblical one which Christ's vicarious action sustains."[3]

To sum up, Bonhoeffer Christology centers on the Christus praesens. His early Christology, evolving the notion of vicarious action, is contained in the formula: Christ existing as community, i.e., the Church as the Body of Christ in the world. Based on the cross of Jesus Christ, Bonhoeffer expands this rather narrow formulation into the church's involvement in the concrete realities of everyday life. Then he focusses his Christology exclusively on the person of Jesus Christ and its consequence for the individual Christian in the world: the cost of actual discipleship. From the individual disciple and the imitatio Christi Bonhoeffer's Christology shifts to the autonomy of the world and asserts the oneness of the reality of the Lordship of Christ and the reality of the world.

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[1] Ibid., p. 189. [2] Ibid., p. 198. [3] Bethge, p.74.

The present investigation now turns from Bonhoeffer's Christology to his Ecclesiology as the second prerequisite for understanding Bonhoeffer's writings on social philosophy.

CHAPTER II

BONHOEFFER'S ECCLESIOLOGY

Introduction

The most comprehensive account of Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology is to be found in The Communion of Saints. Bonhoeffer's specific undertaking is stated in the subtitle: A Dogmatic Inquiry into the Sociology of the Church. This inquiry, Bonhoeffer contends, must use the dogma, i.e., that body of teachings of the Christian Church concerning the interpretation of the revelation, as its basis. The central issue of the inquiry is the relationship between the essential or normative church and the empirical church. In the Preface Bonhoeffer declares:

> The subject under discussion belongs to dogmatics, not to the sociology of religion. The inquiry into Christian social philosophy and sociology is a genuinely dogmatic one, since it can be answered only if our starting-point is the concept of the church.[1]

The following remarks only serve to trace Bonhoeffer's development of the concept of the church. A detailed presentation of Bonhoeffer's views concerning the relationship between individual and social being or the individual and the collective person will be undertaken in his social philosophy proper.

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 11.

Bonhoeffer begins his investigation of the nature and reality of the church by examining the Christian concept of the person and of community. He derives these concepts, which in his view establish the norm and limit for all empirical sociality, from the basic social relation, the I-Thou relation. This relation is based on the absolute distinction between God and man and man and community. Bonhoeffer describes this relation as ethical transcendence which arises whenever man as a moral person is confronted by the claim of God and other men. In Bonhoeffer's opinion only in the community of love, the church, is the full realization of all I-Thou relationships possible. Consequently only in the church, Bonhoeffer asserts, can the individual become a true Christian person. Bonhoeffer believes that the concept of the church can only be understood from its inner history. The church has its origin in the community of love which existed between God and man in the primal state (Urstand). After its destruction in the Fall, the community of love was restored by God's revelation in Jesus Christ as the community of saints, the church. Here is the beginning of Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology.

The Essential Church

The church is at once a community of persons and a collective person. It is only as a collective person that the church as Body of Christ (corpus Christi) can supersede the collective person of the old mankind of Adam. "Communion with God," Bonhoeffer maintains, "exists only through Christ, but Christ is present only in his church, hence there is communion with God only in the church."[1] Here the congruence of Bonhoeffer's Christology and Ecclesiology becomes evident.

The communion with God is made possible through the Word, i.e., through Christ and the Holy Spirit. The church, a community based on love, Bonhoeffer describes as a multiplicity of spirits, as a community of spirit and as a spiritual unity. The church as a communion of love is possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit. The church as the community of saints, that is, as essential or normative church, is characterized by the principle of vicarious action. In the church as a community the Christians are with one another and for each other, but the individuality of each Christian as a person is maintained.

The church as the communio sanctorum finds its ultimate unity as a collective person, its spiritual unity, only in the person of Christ. "The unity of the

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[1] Op. cit., p. 116.

Christian church is not based upon the oneness of human spirits, but upon the unity of the divine spirit . . . The personal unity of the church is 'Christ existing as the church'."[1]

The Empirical Church

The essential church as the reality of revelation is actual only in the empirical church. The empirical church is concerned with the salvation of mankind. Since the world is still the world of sin and guilt the church as the sanctorum communio coexists in time with the peccatorum communio. Consequently neither the Spirit of Christ as the spiritual unity of the essential church, nor the Holy Spirit actualizing this church in history can be identified with the objective spirit of the empirical church as a collective person.

The aim of the empirical church is to achieve God's will under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The history of the empirical church shows that not only individual Christians are liable to sin and error but the objective spirit of the church as well, assuming different characteristics with changing historical situations. Nevertheless Bonhoeffer claims that the history of the church is the hidden center of world history. Though the church will not achieve perfection within the course of history, it indicates man's true destiny, namely, the coming of the Kingdom of God. Concerning Christian eschatology, Bonhoeffer writes:

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[1] Ibid., p. 138.

> Here the kingdom of Christ has become the kingdom of God; here the ministerium of Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Word is at an end. Christ himself gives his church into his Father's keeping (I Cor. 15-24), that God may be all in all.[1]

In conclusion it can be said that Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology is contained in the notion: Christ existing as the church. Through Christ's vicarious action, God and man are reconciled. Christ existing as the church is, first, the church as an end in itself in which God's will is done. It is "the consummated church established in Christ through God's action, the church of God."[2] Secondly, the church is a means to an end by which God's will is done in the world. The church is the result of "the action of the Holy Spirit as the will of God for the historical actualization of the church of Jesus Christ."[3] Thirdly, it is in the world that the objective human spirit of the community, which has been actualized by the Holy Spirit, confronts the Holy Spirit as the empirical church.

The Church in the World

The question arises: how can the communion of love, living according to the principle of vicarious action, become an actuality in the world? The concreteness of revelation, the central theme of Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology, is experienced in the activities of the empirical church in the world. The church as the reality of God's revelation, therefore, is possible only as social experience. Consequently the empirical church can strive to become the real church only by remaining fully in the world as a witnessing community bound by church discipline and brotherhood.

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[1] Ibid., p. 203. [2] Ibid., p. 104. [3] Ibid., p. 104.

Bonhoeffer stresses the "this-worldliness" of the church already in The Communion of Saints. He writes:

> It is precisely in the commonplace surroundings of every day that the church is believed and experienced; it is not in moments of spiritual exultation, but in the monotony and severity of daily life, and in the regular worship of God that we come to understand the church's full significance.[1]

A gradual shift from the theoretical to the practical is evident in Bonhoeffer's writings. The theologian becomes also a preacher and a Christian actively involved in his church not only on the local level but in the ecumenical movement as well. Castigating a complacent church in the midst of misery, Bonhoeffer writes:

> The hour in which the church prays today: Thy Kingdom come! forces the church for better or for worse into the community of the children of the earth and of the world; it obligates the church to be faithful to the earth, to misery, to hunger. to death. This hour establishes the total solidarity of the church with evil and the guilt of the brother.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 198.

[2] "Die Stunde, in der die Kirche heute um das Reich betet, zwingt sie ganz hinein auf Gedeih und Verderb in die Genossenchaft der Erden- und Weltkinder, sie verschwört sie der Treue zur Erde, zum Elend, zum Hunger, zum Sterben. Sie macht sie solidarisch ganz und gar mit dem Bösen und der Schuld des Bruders." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Gesammelte Schriften, Dritter Band, p. 274. (translation mine)

Bonhoeffer wants the church to take a stand, to let its voice be heard, and to speak above all with authority. The basis of this authority is God's revelation in gospel and commandment. "The church is the presence of God in the world . . . . The church is not a consecrated sanctuary, but the world called by God to God; therefore there is only one church in all the world."[1] The empirical church is not only a parochial, a regional, and a national church, but first and foremost it should be a universal church, since it is only as one universal church that Christ's claim to the whole world is really meaningful. Bonhoeffer expresses his concern for the unification of the churches already in The Communion of Saints: "In spite of the recognition that we shall never be able to attain an absolute oneness corresponding to the unity of the Spirit, the will for the greatest possible realisation of this oneness will be alive in the church."[2] The theological foundation for Bonhoeffer's conviction can also be found in his first work.

> We believe in the church as una, for it is 'Christ existing as the church', as sancta, since the Holy Spirit is at work in it, and as catholica, since as the church of God its call is to the whole world, and it is present wherever God's word is preached in the world.[3]

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[1] No Rusty Swords, Letters, Lectures and Notes 1928-1936 from the Collected Works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Vol. I, edited and introduced by Edwin H. Robertson, translated by Edwin H. Robertson and John Bowden (London: Collins, 1965), p. 154.

[2] The Communion of Saints, p. 141. [3] Ibid., p. 197.

When in 1931, Bonhoeffer became youth secretary in the ecumenical movement, he reiterated his earlier conviction: "We really ought to be one church. From our incomprehensible disunion we press forward towards a new community of all Christians."[1]

Numerous publications indicate that Bonhoeffer is not only a stout supporter but also an acute critic of the ecumenical movement. The effectiveness of the work for church unity and international cooperation and for peace is, in Bonhoeffer's opinion, severely curtailed by a lack of an ecumenical theology. In a speech advocating the need for a common theological basis in order to achieve unified and meaningful results in the ecumenical endeavor, Bonhoeffer frankly admits and points to the helplessness and perplexity among the various representatives concerning decisive theological issues. In this context it is interesting to note that Bonhoeffer raises some fundamental questions concerning the relationship between Christianity and the world which anticipate the ones which he will ask later in the letters from prison.

> What is this Christianity which we always hear mentioned? Is it essentially the content of the Sermon on the Mount, or is it the message of the reconciliation in the cross and the resurrection of our Lord? What significance does

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[1] "Wir sollten wirklich eine Kirche sein. Aus unserer unbegreiflichen Zerrissenheit dringen wir auf eine neue Gemeinschaft aller Christen." Gesammelte Schriften, III, p. 256.

> the Sermon on the Mount have for our actions? What is the relationship between the forms of our modern life and the Christian proclamation? What has the state, business, our social life to do with Christianity?[1]

The various and often conflicting answers which individual churches provide with regard to the place and function of Christianity in the world must be reexamined in the light of a new ecumenical theology. This theology, Bonhoeffer maintains, is to be derived from a "new, strict theological work on the biblical and Reformation basis of our ecumenical understanding of the church."[2]

A sound theological basis must be supplemented by the church's concrete knowledge of the reality of the world. "The church must be able to say the Word of God, the word of authority, here and now, in the most concrete way possible, from knowledge of the situation."[3] In Bonhoeffer's view the preaching of God's Word must be followed by the church's involvement in the daily life of men. "The church may not therefore preach timeless principles however true, but only commandments which are true today. God is 'always' God to us 'today'."[4]

At present, the church's word, addressing Christendom and the world, is beset by a grave danger, namely, the lack of one common truth in the proclamation of the gospel. This division of the church, Bonhoeffer admonishes, "must make our word powerless, indeed false. But almost more fearful than this is the way in which we gladly set ourselves above it. Here we are on the edge of the abyss."[1]

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[1] No Rusty Swords, p. 159. [2] Ibid., p. 160.

[3] Ibid., p. 162. [4] Ibid., p. 162.

The work of the ecumenical movement and that of individual national churches, struggling against political turmoil and severe economic crises, is not successful. In Germany, following Hitler's rise to power, the church has to fight for its very existence.

The impact of the historical events before the outbreak of the Second World War is reflected in Bonhoeffer's speeches and writings during this period. In the ecumenical movement Bonhoeffer calls for unity in one universal church and stresses the brotherhood of all Christians:

> This Church of Christ lives at one and the same time in all peoples, yet beyond all boundaries, whether national, political, social, or racial. And the brothers who make up this Church are bound together, through the commandment of the one Lord Christ, whose word they hear, more inseparably than men are bound by all the ties of common history, of blood, of class and of language.[2]

In Germany, Bonhoeffer reminds the church to be itself and to listen anew to the message of the Bible and not to succumb to the lure of national aggrandizement by accomodation to and cooperation with the political power.

The importance which Bonhoeffer assigns to the Scriptures as the only relevant source for the restoration of the church is evident in some of his letters written in the thirties. In April of 1936, Bonhoeffer writes to his brother-in-law Rüdiger Schleicher:

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[1] No Rusty Swords, p. 172.

[2] Gesammelte Schriften, I, p. 447.

> How do I live a Christian life in the real world, and where are the last authorities for such a life, which alone is worthwhile living? To begin with I quite simply have to confess: I believe that the Bible alone is the answer to all our questions, and that we need only to ask persistently and somewhat humbly in order to receive an answer.[1]

For Bonhoeffer the Bible is the foundation of a Christian life of faith. The church, in order to preserve its integrity in the proclamation of the Word, and the individual Christian as a believer in the Word, must decide either for or against the Bible. Faith and obedience belong together, as Bonhoeffer later states emphatically in The Cost of Discipleship:

> There is no road to faith or discipleship, no other road - only obedience to the call of Jesus [since] faith is only real when there is obedience, never without it, and faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience . . . In the one case faith is the condition of obedience, and in the other obedience the condition of faith.[2]

Bonhoeffer hints in this letter already at his later distinction between "cheap" and "costly" grace, i.e., his claim that the church is dispensing cheap grace by its secularization of Christianity and its attempt to accommodate the Bible to the contemporary situation in Germany:

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[1] "Wie lebe ich in dieser wirklichen Welt ein christliches Leben, und wo sind die letzten Autoritäten eines solchen Lebens, das sich allein lohnt zu leben? Ich will da zunächst ganz einfach bekennen: ich glaube, dass die Bibel allein die Antwort auf alle unsere Fragen ist, und dass wir nur anhaltend und etwas demütig zu fragen brauchen, um die Antwort von ihr zu bekommen." Gesammelte Schriften, III, p. 26 (translation mine)

[2] The Cost of Discipleship, p. 62, p. 69.

> If I am the one who determines where God is to be found, then I shall always find a God there who somehow complies and is agreeable to me, who belongs to my nature. But if it is God who determines where he wants to be found, then it will be a place which does not suit my nature at all, which is not agreeable to me. This place is the cross of Christ. And whoever wants to find him there, that one must submit to the cross as it is demanded in the Sermon on the Mount.[1]

As early as 1935, Bonhoeffer had publically repudiated the tendency to actualize biblical texts. "Actualization is done," Bonhoeffer declares, "by allowing the biblical message to sift through the sieve of one's own cognition, despising and discarding what will not pass through; pruning and clipping the biblical message until it fits into a given space."[2]

Bonhoeffer's own decision to an unswerving allegiance to the Bible is revealed in a letter to his brother,

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[1] "Bin ich es,der sagt, wo Gott sein soll, so werde ich dort immer einen Gott finden, der mir irgendwie entspricht, gefällig ist, der meinem Wesen zugehörig ist. Ist es aber Gott, der sagt, wo er sein will, dann wird das wohl ein Ort sein, der meinem Wesen zunächst gar nicht gefällig ist. Dieser Ort aber ist das Kreuz Christi. Und wer ihn dort finden will, der muss mit unter dieses Kreuz, wie es die Bergpredigt fordert." Gesammelte Schriften, III, pp. 27-28. (translation mine)

[2] "Die Vergegenwärtigung so vorzunehmen, dass man die biblische Botschaft durch das Sieb der eigenen Erkenntnis laufen lässt - und was nicht hindurch will, wird verachtet und weggeschüttet -; dass man die Botschaft so weit zurechtschneidet und stutzt, bis sie in den festgelegten Rahmen hineinpasst." Ibid., p. 304. (translation mine)

Karl Friedrich. He writes:

> It may be that in some ways I will appear to you somewhat crazy and fanatical. I am myself anxious about it. But I know that were I to be 'reasonable' I would honestly in the next few days, have to put the whole of my theology on a shelf . . . But I believe that I am at least on the right track for the first time in my life . . . I believe that I first become clear and completely honest when I begin taking the Sermon on the Mount seriously . . . The restoration of the church will come from a new kind of monasticism, which has in common with the old only an uncompromising life based on the Sermon on the Mount in the following of Christ. I believe the time has come to assemble men for this task.[1]

The Cost of Discipleship is Bonhoeffer's proposal for a restoration of the church. The work is completely determined by his christological thought. At the very beginning Bonhoeffer asks: "What did Jesus mean to say to us? What is his will for us today? How can he help us to be good Christians in the modern world?

The need to ask these questions at all, Bonhoeffer contends, stems from the fact that through the centuries the church has obscured the message of Jesus to such a degree that it is difficult to understand for the individual Christians and is irrelevant to their daily problems. Bonhoeffer traces the source of this dilemma to the church's misuse of Luther's doctrine of justification by faith by omitting the obligation to discipleship. He notes:

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[1] "Es mag ja sein, dass ich in manchen Dingen Dir etwas fanatisch und verrückt erscheine. Und ich habe selbst manchmal Angst davor. Aber ich weiss, wenn ich 'vernünftiger' wäre, so müsste ich am nächsten Tag ehrlicherweise meine ganze Theologie an den Nagel hängen . . . Aber ich glaube nun endlich zu wissen, wenigstens einmal auf die richtige Spur gelommen zu sein - zum ersten Mal in meinem Leben . . . Ich glaube zu wissen, dass ich eigentlich erst innerlich klar und wirklich aufrichtig sein würde, wenn ich mit der Bergpredigt wirklich anfinge, Ernst zu machen . . . Die Restauration der Kirche kommt gewiss aus einer Art neuen Mönchtums, das mit dem alten nur die Kompromisslosigkeit eines Lebens nach der Bergpredigt in der Nachfolge Christi gemeinsam hat. Ich glaube, es ist an der Zeit, hierfür die Menschen zu sammeln." *Ibid*., pp. 24-25. (translation mine)

[2] *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 37.

> Judged by the standards of Luther's doctrine, that of his followers was unassailable, and yet their orthodoxy spelt the end and destruction of the Reformation as the revelation on earth of the costly grace of God. The justification of the sinner in the world degenerated into the justification of sin and the world. Costly grace was turned into cheap grace without discipleship.[1]

Luther's leaving the monastery to return into the world proves that a Christian life is possible only by living fully in the world. Bonhoeffer, referring to Luther, writes:

> The other-worldliness of the Christian ought, Luther concluded, to be manifested in the very midst of the world, in the Christian community and in its daily life. Hence the Christian task is to live out that life in terms of his secular calling. That is the way to die unto the world.[2]

This does not entail that the Christian and the worldly life are identical. The fact, however, is that the Christian and the worldly life have become indistinguishable by the easy availability of what Bonhoeffer calls "cheap" grace, "the deadly enemy of our Church."[3] Bonhoeffer defines cheap grace "as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian 'conception' of God."[1]

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 53. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 297-98. [3] *Ibid.*, p.45.

Bonhoeffer lashes out against the church which bestows cheap grace, distorts and thereby destroys its own doctrine. He states: "It is under the influence of this kind of 'grace' that the world has been made 'Christian', but at the cost of secularizing the Christian religion as never before."[2] Consequently cheap grace as a general principle has brought about the almost complete deterioration of the church and of Christian life. A restoration is possible only, Bonhoeffer claims, by a return "to the Scriptures, to the Word and call of Jesus Christ himself."[3]

The call of Jesus to faith or discipleship is a gift of grace; it is costly grace, since it requires the disciple's total adherence to Jesus and the law of God. "Those who try to use this grace as a dispensation from following Christ," Bonhoeffer maintains, "are simply deceiving themselves."[4] Bonhoeffer gives the following definition of costly grace:

> It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is _costly_ because it cost God the life of his Son . . . It is _grace_ because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up to us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.[5]

Jesus' call to discipleship is heard in the Word and in the sacraments; it addresses individual men. Each man enters into discipleship alone. Bonhoeffer's thoughts concerning the relationship between the individual Christian and society will be discussed in detail later within the context of his social philosophy. At present only the essential features of discipleship will be outlined in order to understand correctly Bonhoeffer's conception of the church.

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 45. [2] _Ibid._, p. 54. [3] _Ibid._, p. 39.

[4] _Ibid._, p. 55. [5] _Ibid._, pp. 47-48.

The Church and Discipleship

Discipleship is, as has been pointed out earlier, based on obedience and faith or, as Bonhoeffer states categorically: "The man who disobeys cannot believe, for only he who obeys can believe."[1] Bonhoeffer's insistence that it is necessary first to obey the call of Jesus so that faith can follow anticipates the distinction between the ultimate and the penultimate and their interrelationship as set forth in the _Ethics_. Furthermore, discipleship means also the sharing in the suffering of Christ, a notion which Bonhoeffer emphasizes again later in his letters from prison.

The following of Jesus in obedience and faith requires of the disciple the leaving of the world. However, it is not an escape from the world, a kind of monasticism, which Bonhoeffer proclaims as the ideal of the Christian life. "The following of Christ, " Bonhoeffer declares," is not the achievement or merit of a select few, but the divine command of all Christians without distinction."[2]

The individual Christian who decides to follow

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[1] _Op. cit._, p. 73. [2] _Ibid._, p. 50.

Christ wholeheartedly leaves the world only to enter into the fellowship of the church; since, as Bonhoeffer asserts: "The preaching of the Church and the administration of the sacraments is the place where Jesus Christ is present."[1] Discipleship, therefore, is possible only by the individual's partaking of the sacrament. "Baptism incorporates us into the unity of the Body of Christ, and the Lord's Supper fosters and sustains our fellowship and communion in that Body."[2]

The visible church is "the congregation gathered round the Word and Sacrament."[3] One essential characteristic of the congregation is the complete absence of all distinctions which separate men in the world, in the visible church are only Christians. "We take account of each other only with regard to our membership in the Body of Christ, that is to say, that we are all one in Christ."[4] The other mark of distinction of the visible church, based on Jesus' own concrete humanity, is its relation with the world. Bonhoeffer explains the seemingly paradoxical situation of the church as being simultaneously estranged from the world and in the world as follows:

> To stay in the world with God means simply to live in the rough and tumble of the world and at the same time remain in the Body of Christ, the visible Church, to take part in its worship and to live the life of discipleship. In so doing we bear testimony to the defeat of the world.[5]

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[1] *Ibid.* , p. 250. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 267. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 281.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 288. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 292.

It is only by bringing out the full contrast between the life of discipleship, the imitatio Christi, and the ordinary life in the world that true witness can be borne to Christ as the mediator, who alone can call men to follow him. The relationship between Christ and the church, as the Body of Christ and as the visible church, is best stated in Bonhoeffer's own words:

> Christ, incarnate, crucified and glorified is formed in every Christian soul, for all are members of his Body, the Church. The Church bears the human form, the form of Christ in his death and resurrection. The Church in the first place is his image, and through the Church all her members have been refashioned in his image too. In the Body of Christ we are becoming 'like Christ'.[1]

In conclusion it can be said that The Cost of Discipleship is the answer to the questions Bonhoeffer had raised earlier in his letters. The Bible and the Sermon on the Mount must be taken seriously in order to arrest and reverse the ever-growing secularization of Christian life and of the church. But it is only from the decision of the individual Christian to follow the call of Jesus that the church, as the community of the disciples of Christ, can fulfill its task: the restoration of lost mankind to fellowship with God.

The theory advanced in The Cost of Discipleship finds its practical application in the education for the ministry in the Confessing Church. The concrete living together as a community of disciples in the ordinand's seminary exemplifies the Christian life based on obedience and faith. In Life Together, the account of the experiences gathered in this experiment of community life, Bonhoeffer writes: "Christian community means community through and in Jesus Christ. On this presupposition rests everything that the Scriptures provide in the way of directions and precepts for the communal life of Christians."[1]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 343-44.

To sum up: The development of Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology in the period from the early thirties to the outbreak of World War II is determined by two features: expansion and concentration. First, Bonhoeffer's active participation in the ecumenical movement is reflected in his emphasis upon the universality of the church and its involvement in the affairs of the world. Secondly, the church-struggle in Germany and the ambiguous attitude of the ecumenical movement in this controversy caused Bonhoeffer to turn to the foundation of the church, the Scriptures and Jesus Christ, and to stress the otherness of the church and the separation between Christian and worldly life.

The restoration of the church, as set forth in The Cost of Discipleship and in Life Together, represents the strongest concentration upon the essential in Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology. However, Bonhoeffer's call to discipleship, E. Bethge maintains, should not be considered as Weltflucht. "On the contrary it is all attack, for no other reason than to save the creative openness and earthly breadth of the message."[1]

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[1] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together, translated and with an introduction by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper, 1954), p.24.

The Church in the World

The severe restrictions imposed by the authorities upon Bonhoeffer's activities for the Confessing Church and the ecumenical movement result in the brief American interlude in the summer of 1939, and, more important, in his turning gradually from passive to active resistance against Nazism. The experiences of the years immediately preceding the war and those in the first years of the hostilities strongly Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology contained in the fragmentary writings which are known today as his Ethics.

This-worldliness, based on Christ's claim to totality, is the outstanding feature of the Ecclesiology which Bonhoeffer develops in his Ethics. Observing the devaluation of all values and the ruthless suppression of Christian life in his time Bonhoeffer maintains that "in the face of the Antichrist only one thing has force and permanence, and that is Christ Himself."[2]

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[1] Bethge, p. 52. [2] Ethics, p. 56.

The true origin of all values can only be found in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, therefore, is not only present in the church but he claims the whole of mankind. Consequently Bonhoeffer demands: "The more exclusively we acknowledge and confess Christ as our Lord, the more fully the wide range of His dominon will be disclosed to us."[1]

However, the recognition that Jesus Christ is the redeemer of all mankind is still restricted to his church. "The Church," Bonhoeffer states, " bears the form which is in truth the proper form of all humanity. The image in which she is formed is the image of man. What takes place in her takes place as an example and substitute for all men."[2] It is in this sense that Bonhoeffer's notion of "formation" is to be understood; i.e., the formation of the church directly, and the formation of mankind indirectly, in conformity with the form of Christ. The church, then, stands vicariously for mankind: not removed from, but in the midst of worldly existence as a witness to Jesus Christ before the world.

Already in The Cost of Discipleship Bonhoeffer spoke of the visible church as the congregation which remains and occupies space in the world. This space is not to be understood in an empirical sense, but, as Bonhoeffer explains: "The Church of Jesus Christ is the place, in other words the space in the world, at which the reign of Jesus

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[1] Op. cit., p. 56. [2] Ibid., p. 83.

Christ over the world is evidenced and proclaimed."[1] The reign of Christ over the world does not entail the reign of the church over the world as will be explained later in a discussion of the theory of mandates; more specifically, in an examination of the mandate: church. The space the church needs should not be more than that which the proclamation of the Word requires, that is the imparting to the world of its reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ.

Though the church and the world are different, the relation between the church and the world is not that of two distinct and separate realms; it is solely determined by the relation of God to the world. The world is completely the world of Christ. "Christ died for the world, and it is only in the midst of the world that Christ is Christ"[2] Bonhoeffer argues in rejecting the separation of church and world. The difference of the church from the world rests on nothing but "the fact that she affirms in faith the reality of God's acceptance of man, a reality which is the property of the whole world."[3]

But as the history of the western world after the Reformation and the accompanying trend towards secularization indicate, men resist and even reject the message of the church. Bonhoeffer's view on history will be discussed in the following chapter as the third component in the triad: Christ or Christology; Church or Ecclesiology; and finally,

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 202. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 206. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

World or History; which constitute the necessary prerequisite for an understanding of his social philosophy.

The proclamation of the message of Jesus Christ is the church's only means to preserve the heritage of the past and to secure the future of the western world. The defection from Christ, i.e., from man's essential nature, Bonhoeffer declares, is not only a guilt incurred by individual men; it is also a guilt of the church. Bonhoeffer accuses the church of breaking all of the ten commandments, thereby contributing to the turning away of men from God and Christ. It is only through Christ's grace that the church, as a collective person in which Christ has taken form, is the place in which the guilt towards Christ can be recognized. This, Bonhoeffer states, is the reason "why the Church alone can be the place of personal and collective rebirth and renewal."[1] The precondition for a rebirth, i.e., the re-attainment of the form of Christ, and for justification is the free confession of guilt. There is no other solution, Bonhoeffer insists, "either the Church must willingly undergo this transformation, or else she must cease to be the Church of Christ."[2]

To sum up, the concreteness of revelation is the central theme of Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology. The church as reality of God's revelation is possible only as social experience. Consequently the church is not only the essential church as the form or Body of Christ (corpus Christi), it is also the visible or empirical church in which the concreteness of revelation is experienced in the sacraments.

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[1] Ibid., p. 111. [2] Ibid., p. 116.

Bonhoeffer presents the theoretical foundation of the church in The Communion of Saints under the formula: Christ existing as the church. The practical application of gospel and commandment Bonhoeffer expresses in the demand for the concreteness of the biblical message in the reality of the world.

A complete shift from expansion, i.e., an emphasis on the this-worldliness and universality of the church, to concentration, i.e., an emphasis on the otherness of the church from the world, characterizes Bonhoeffer's ecclesiological writings in the years before the outbreak of the war. The essential feature is the cost of discipleship, the imitatio Christi.

The Ecclesiology in the Ethics reveals the return of the church into the world; it can be condensed into the phrase: Jesus Christ exists not only in the church, but he reigns over the whole world. The church stands vicariously for the world, but Christ is the triumphant Lord, the center of life, of history, and of all reality.

CHAPTER III

BONHOEFFER'S VIEW OF HISTORY

Introduction

In his earlier writings Bonhoeffer does not concern himself directly with an evaluation of history from a Christian perspective. As John Phillips points out: "He dismissed the historical question as the attempt of modern man to dissolve the central scandal of the Christian faith into an 'essence', which might then be manipulated and distorted in accordance with one's own purpose."[1] Consequently Bonhoeffer ignored Troeltsch's investigation into the relation between faith and history. The church is a reality of revelation, Bonhoeffer argued, therefore the church cannot be judged from the outside.

The significance of history is impressed upon Bonhoeffer by the series of crises culminating in World War II. In the Ethics Bonhoeffer assesses the history of the Christian west; he comments later on his earlier view in the letters from prison. Even though Bonhoeffer's outlook on history in the Ethics contrasts sharply with the one set forth in the Letters and Papers from Prison, the common basis is the notion of Christ as the center of history.

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[1] John A. Phillips, The Form of Christ in the World (London: Collins,1967), p. 146.

The Christological Foundation of History

In the Christian view human history is placed between Creation and Eschaton. It does not extend as an unbroken continuum from origin to telos as presented by idealism. Essential to the Christian understanding of history is the recognition of the distinction between the primal state and the Fall. Human history begins with the Fall. Since man's immediate communion with God has been broken, history is bound up with the reality of sin and death.

The time between the Fall and the appearance of Jesus Christ is the time of expectation of and preparation for a redeeming event. Bonhoeffer remarks in his Christology lectures: "History lives between promise and fulfilment . . . The promise of a Messiah is alive everywhere in history. History lives in and from this expectation. That is its meaning, the coming of the Messiah."[1]

The central event in history is God's revelation in Jesus Christ. In Christ the reality of God entered into the reality of the world in order to integrate mankind into the Lordship of God over the world. But the world is still a world of sin and death, so that the life, death, and resurrection of the God-man Jesus Christ restores man's communion with God only eschatologically.

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[1] Christ the Center, p. 63.

The Christocentrism and the eschatological character of Bonhoeffer's view of history is clearly expressed in the claim that the life of the historical God-man Jesus Christ stands vicariously for the history of mankind. "Because the whole of the new mankind is really established in Jesus Christ,"Bonhoeffer asserts, "he represents the whole history of mankind in his historical life."[1] History, Bonhoeffer writes, "comes from God and goes to God, it has meaning and value as such, however broken its origin and destiny may be."[2] This eschatological conception of history denies that history has any rationally perceptible purpose and cannot be regarded as a progressive development. Human history in the Christian view is therefore a history of salvation. The end of all history is the Kingdom of God. After the resurrection and the ascension of Christ mankind lives from the end, that is, in the expectation of the second coming of Christ and its redemption.

The church as Christ's presence in the world prepares fallen mankind for the coming of the Kingdom of God. "The church," Bonhoeffer states," believes in Christ and in nothing else . . . Christ is the beginning, the new and the end of our world."[3] The church is the place where the Word is present and for that reason, Bonhoeffer declares, the "history of the church is the hidden centre of world history."[1]

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 107. [2] Ibid., p. 61.

[3] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, trans. by John C. Fletcher (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), p. 12.

History is God's means to His end; it is sanctified because God entered into it. Since history is made by the state, the church as the hidden center of world history is therefore also the hidden center of the state. The state is for the faithful the other form of Christ's presence in the world. A detailed discussion of the relationship between the church and the state will follow within the context of the presentation of the theory of mandates. Now it should suffice to render Bonhoeffer's own summary concerning the notion of Christ as the center of history.

> Christ as the centre of history is the mediator between the state and God, in the form of the church. Similarly as the centre of history he is the mediator between this church and God. For he is also the centre of this church and only because he is can it be the centre of history.[2]

Nature, constantly influencing human action, has a share in the making of history. "Human existence," Bonhoeffer writes," is always history, is always nature as well."[3]

To sum up: The key to Bonhoeffer's Christocentric interpretation of history, to be reviewed in the next section, is to be found in the Incarnation. In the

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 146.

[2] Christ the Center, p. 66. [3] Ibid., p. 67.

God-man Jesus Christ the whole reality of the world, in its origin as God's Creation and in its destiny as God's Kingdom, is contained. Christ as the mediator is the middle, the center and meaning of history from the Fall to the Kingdom of God; "the end of the old world and the beginning of the new world of God."[1]

The History of the Christian West

Jesus Christ, Bonhoeffer writes in his Ethics, "is the truly real one, who has borne within Himself and fulfilled the essence of history and in whom the law of the life of history is embedded."[2] This Christocentrism is reflected in his evaluation of the history of the Christian west. Bonhoeffer describes his task as "a discussion of the way in which in this western world the form of Christ takes form."[3] Though he regards the western world as a self-contained entity, he emphasizes that any statements about a section of humanity refer also to the whole of humanity. Consequently the relationship between Christ and the western nations is applicable to the whole world. "The whole reality of the world," Bonhoeffer claims," is already drawn in into Christ and bound together in Him, and the movement of history consists solely in divergence and convergence in relation to this centre."[4]

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[1] Christ the Center, p. 67. [2] Ethics, p. 230.

[3] Ibid., p. 87. [4] Ibid., p. 193.

Observing his contemporary world Bonhoeffer cannot but consider the general situation as one of divergence from Christ. Reviewing western Christendom in relation to the distinction between the ultimate and the penultimate, Bonhoeffer notes:

> The calling in question of the last things, of the ultimate, which has been taking place to an ever increasing extent during the past two hundred years, has at the same time imperilled the stability of the penultimate, which was closely linked here with the ultimate, and has brought it near to disruption. And in its turn the breaking up of the penultimate has as its concequence an intensified neglect and depreciation of the ultimate.[1]

It is not surprising, therefore, that Bonhoeffer entitles that section of his Ethics which deals with the history of the Christian west: "Inheritance and Decay."

The concept of historical inheritance depends for the Christian west exclusively upon the appearance of Jesus Christ at a certain time and at a certain place in history. It is through this historical event that the heritage of the west is directly linked with the people of Israel.

Classical antiquity also forms a part of the Christian heritage. The reconciliation between nature and grace characterizes the Roman element; while the opposition between nature and grace manifests itself in the Greek element. The gap between classical antiquity and Christianity is narrowed whenever Christ's humanity is stressed; it is widened by an accentuation of Christ's crucifixion. In Bonhoeffer's view classical antiquity can be genuinely inherited by the west only in relation to Christ as both the incarnate and the crucified.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

Turning to the heritage of the Christian west, Bonhoeffer asserts: "Jesus Christ has made of the west a historical unit . . . The unity of the west is not an idea but a historical reality, of which the sole foundation is Christ."[1] In spite of the constant struggle for supremacy between the Pope and the Emperor the unity of the Christian west was preserved until the Reformation. "It was the Reformation that broke asunder the unity of the faith," declares Bonhoeffer,"so that the _corpus christianum_ is resolved in its true constituents, the _corpus Christi_ and the world."[2]

Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms rejects the church's claim for political power. Both, the church and the state must serve Jesus Christ through the Word and the sword, respectively. But it is the Lordship of Christ over the world, manifested in the Word and sacrament, which unites the faithful in the invisible Catholic Church, "the true unity of the western world."[3] Bonhoeffer, considering the Reformation and its consequences, writes later about Luther from his prison cell:

> He desired a real unity both for the Church and for Western Christendom, but the consequences was the ruin of both. He sought the 'Freedom of the Christian Man,'

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 92. [2] _Ibid_., p. 94. [3] _Ibid_., p. 95.

> and the consequence was apathy and barbarism. He hoped to see the establishment of a genuine social order free from clerical privilege, and the outcome was the Peasant Revolt, and soon afterwards the gradual dissolution of all real cohesion and order in society.[1]

In the wake of the Reformation follows the secularization of the western world. Bonhoeffer blames this development , i.e., the emancipation and growing autonomy of the world, on the misinterpretation of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms.

> What has been utterly forgotten here is the original message of the Reformation that there is no holiness of man either in the sacred or in the profane as such, but only that which comes through the merciful and sin-forgiving word of God.[2]

Anti-clericalism and even anti-Christian tendencies are arising on the Catholic side as the first fruits of the process of secularization. These strong anti-Christian sentiments Bonhoeffer regards as the reasons why man's desire for freedom finds its expression with revolutionary fervor first in Catholic France. The French Revolution is in Bonhoeffer's opinion "the laying bare of the emancipated man in his tremendous power and his most terrible perversity."[3] However, Bonhoeffer concedes that emancipated reason, leading to intellectual clarity and honesty, cleared away prejudices and out-dated forms of belief, so that rationalism, and with it truthfulness, became an essential prerequisite of western man. Bonhoeffer's positive assessment changes to a negative verdict with regard to the employment of reason for the discovery of the laws of nature and thereby man's mastery over nature. The fast rising rational and empirical sciences with the ensuing technology forcibly subjugate nature. "The benefits of technology," Bonhoeffer contends, "pale into insignificance beside its demoniacal properties, symbolized by the machine."[1] But technology has become an integral part of the life of modern man and it must therefore be accepted, Bonhoeffer believes.

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[1] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 71.

[2] Ethics, p. 96. [3] Ibid., p. 97.

Another result of the emancipation of reason is the Declaration of the Rights of Man. But these rights together with the claim to human dignity and the notion of the General Will became actualities only for the bourgeoisie. The masses, the fourth estate, remained in what Bonhoeffer calls a state of "undeserved wretchedness." Rejecting the nobility of blood and the nobility of achievement the masses are in Bonhoeffer's view a "dark menace." "The masses," he writes, "have equal contempt for the laws of blood and for the laws of reason. They make their own law, the law of misery. It is a violent law, and short-lived. We are today standing at the culmination and crisis of this uprising."[2]

Based on the Rights of Man, modern nationalism is an additional product of the French Revolution which evolved as a reaction against absolutism. Employing for the first time the notion "coming of age", Bonhoeffer remarks:

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 98. [2] *Ibid*., p. 100.

> The people deemed that they had now come of age, that they were now capable of taking in hand the direction of their own internal and external history. They asserted their right to freedom and development as a people, the right to a government which should rest on the will of the nation.[1]

Bonhoeffer interjects here an interesting observation concerning the contention that Prussia is the cradle of nationalism. "Prussia," Bonhoeffer claims, "was a state, but not a nation."[2] Prussia is to be identified with established government and not with the revolutionary concept of nationalism born out of the French Revolution. Nationalism and its reaction internationalism have inherent revolutionary tendencies. "Prussia," Bonhoeffer declares, "wished neither to be nationalistic nor international. In this respect its thought was more western than was that of the Revolution."[3]

Technology, mass movement, and nationalism is the legacy of the French Revolution. Assessing these closely allied and yet strongly opposed phenomena, Bonhoeffer states: "The masses and nationalism are hostile to reason. Technology and the masses are hostile to nationalism. Nationalism and technology are hostile to the masses."[4] In view of this statement it is not surprising that Bonhoeffer's verdict of the French Revolution is extremely negative.

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[1] __Ibid__., p. 100. [2] __Ibid__., p. 101. [3] __Ibid__., p. 101.
[4] __Ibid__., p. 102.

Though he acknowledges that with the autonomy of man, the mass, and nationalism, the emancipation of reason established a new unity in the west; yet he condemns man's liberation as an absolute ideal. The destruction of the biblical faith in God and the apostasy from Jesus Christ by the deification of man must end in man's self-destruction. This unrestrained vitalism, as Bonhoeffer calls the result of the autonomy of reason, created a typical western godlessness, a "religion of hostility to God."[1] The New Man is now the god of the western world.

The godlessness of the western world manifests itself in two forms. The one form, hidden under the cloak of religion, Bonhoeffer describes as a "hopeless godlessness." The other form is "a godlessness which is full of promise, a godlessness which speaks against religion and against the Church."[2] Bonhoeffer, anticipating the notion of religionless Christianity of the prison letters, remarks about this godlessness:

> It is the protest against pious godlessness in so far as this has corrupted the Churches, and thus in a certain sense, if only negatively, it defends the heritage of a genuine faith in God and of a genuine Church.[3]

Bonhoeffer concludes his survey of the Christian west with a brief account of the historical development in America. Though this society was established upon a Christian basis, its further development shows that it is not possible to build the world according to Christian principles. The failure to distinguish between church and state, Bonhoeffer maintains, results in secularization and ends with the surrender of the church to the world.

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[1] Ibid., p. 102. [2] Ibid., p. 103. [3] Ibid., p. 103.

Bonhoeffer referred already in The Cost of Discipleship to the antagonism between the world and the church and noted: "The world naturally uses every means in its power to retain its direct hold on men, but that is the very reason why it is so bitterly opposed to Christ, the Mediator."[1] At the end of his assessment of the heritage of the western world Bonhoeffer must admit that the antagonism between the world and the church resulted in the west's apostasy from Christ. The process of secularization is evident in the rejection of the established order and of traditional values. Without confidence in the past and future, the life of men is characterized by the enjoyment of the moment. The decay of the historical inheritance of the Christian west Bonhoeffer sums up in these words: "By the loss of the unity which is possessed through the form of Christ, the western world is brought to the brink of the void."[2]

However, Bonhoeffer believes that the disintegration of the west can be arrested and reversed by "the miracle of a new awakening of faith, and .... the force of order."[1] Only a strict adherence to the true meaning of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms can save the Christian west. It is not only the return to the unity of the Christian world as it existed in the Middle Ages and its renewal as intended by the Reformation which Bonhoeffer recommends, but also the church's concern for the future, the coming generations. In fulfilling its obligation the church vindicates God's claim over the world. "In devoting herself to her proper task, that is to say to preaching the risen Jesus Christ," Bonhoeffer contends, "the Church strikes a mortal blow at the spirit of destruction."[2]

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[1] The Cost of Discipleship, p. 107. [2] Ethics, p. 105.

The defection from Christ, Bonhoeffer asserts, is due to the church's failure to properly carry out its task in the past. Only after a confession of guilt can the church be justified and renewed through a reawakening of the faith in Jesus Christ. The western world depends for its renewal upon the church. "For the nations," Bonhoeffer states, "there is only a healing of the wound, a cicatrization of guilt, in the return to order, to justice, to peace, and to the granting of free passage to the Church's proclamation of Jesus Christ."[3] It is only by a forgiveness within history that the defection from Christ as a collective guilt of the west can be overcome.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 108. [2] _Ibid_., p. 109. [3] _Ibid_., p. 117.

Bonhoeffer's pessimistic evaluation of the secularization of the Christian west rests mainly on his criticism of the results brought about by the proclamation of reason as an absolute ideal. However, a more positive judgment of the emancipation of reason is to be found in his exposition of the notion of the "natural", i.e., natural life which through Christ becomes the penultimate directed towards the ultimate. Here Bonhoeffer considers reason as a part of the natural assisting it against the unnatural. Convinced that in the struggle between the natural and the unnatural the natural life will always reassert itself, Bonhoeffer writes: "In this context there is a solid basis for that optimistic view of human history which confines itself within the limits of the fallen world."[1] This positive judgment foreshadows the more optimistic brief comments on the heritage of the Christian west contained in Bonhoeffer's letters from prison.

Summary

Social and spiritual life, Bonhoeffer claims in his definition of social philosophy, are essentially connected. In order to understand the essential connection between spiritual and social life three main themes in Bonhoeffer's thought have been presented which not only determine but also form the foundation of his social philosophy. The three themes are; Jesus Christ, the Church, and the World, or Bonhoeffer's Christology, Ecclesiology, and his View of History.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

The first and most important theme and also the key to Bonhoeffer's thought is his Christology. Its central notion: Christ as the mediator between the reality of God and the reality of the world determines Bonhoeffer's view of the church and the world. Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology and his View of History may be regarded as forming two concentric circles around his Christology. The quest for the presence of Christ, the pervading feature in all.three themes, places Bonhoeffer's social philosophy on a Christological foundation.

Bonhoeffer early Christology is represented by the formula: Christ existing as community. The presence of Christ is restricted to the church as the Body of Christ in the world. Bonhoeffer's later Christology is characterized by Christ's claim to be the center of all reality. The presence of Christ in the whole world consequently allows the Christian to belong to Christ as well as to the world.

The central theme of Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology is the concreteness of revelation. The church as reality of God is possible only as social experience. The church, therefore, is not only the essential church as the Body of Christ; it is also the visible or empirical church in the world.

The Ecclesiology of the early Bonhoeffer, emphasizing the this-worldliness and universality of the of the church, is almost identical with his Christology as the phrase: Christ existing as the church, indicates. During the church struggle Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology stresses the otherness of the church from the world and the costly grace of discipleship in a defense against the progressive secularization of Christianity. The Ecclesiology in the Ethics centers around a triumphant Lord Jesus Christ and a church which stands vicariously for the world.

Christ the center of history is the key idea which determines Bonhoeffer's View of History. God's revelation in Jesus Christ is the central event in human history which is placed between Creation and Eschaton. Human history is the history of salvation. The church as the presence of Christ in the world is the hidden center of world history. The central issue in Bonhoeffer's evaluation of the history of the Christian west is the secularization of the world. The Christian west can be saved only by a strict adherence to the true meaning of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms.

The essential connection which Bonhoeffer claims to exist between man's spiritual and social life has been illustrated in all three themes. But Bonhoeffer also maintains in his definition of social philosophy that the origins of sociality are to be found in man's spiritual life. The present investigation now turns to Bonhoeffer's social philosophy proper with an exposition of his understanding of the origins of sociality and the relationship between the individual person and society.

PART II

BONHOEFFER'S SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER IV

THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Introduction

The task of social philosophy and sociology is primarily the investigation of the relationship between the individual person and society. However, Bonhoeffer's view of the person and society, presented most comprehensively in the first part of The Communion of Saints, is determined by the very specific nature of his inquiry, namely, the understanding of the Christian church as a community. His main concern, therefore, is the Christian concept of the person and community as interpreted first and foremost by theology. Social philosophy and sociology only serve to elucidate and reinforce the conclusions reached by theology. Bonhoeffer explains in the Preface to The Communion of Saints:

> The fact that every genuinely theological concept can be correctly comprehended only when set within and supplemented by its special social sphere is proof of the specifically theological nature of any inquiry into the sociology of the church.[1]

In his Foreword to The Communion of Saints E. Bethge calls sociology and dialectical theology the "two conflicting bases" from which Bonhoeffer starts to reach an understanding of the church of Christ. Bethge comments about Bonhoeffer's endeavor: "He was attracted by the impossible. What he tried to give in *Sanctorum Communio* was a sociological theology of the church, or a theological sociology."[1]

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 11.

Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the primal state (*Urstand*), expounding the original and essential nature of sociality, will now be presented in its theological, socio-philosophical and sociological aspects.

Christian Concept of the Person

Social philosophy investigates the origins (*Ursprünge*) of sociality which, as Bonhoeffer claims, are to be found in man's spiritual life. How does Bonhoeffer substantiate his claim? Or, in other words, what is the relationship between human spirituality and the origins of sociality?

The basic assertion underlying Bonhoeffer's claim is *in nuce*: man has been created as a *homo socialis*. Man and society are mutually dependent. Bonhoeffer's concern is the Christian concept of the person and that of basic ontic relations. These relations, Bonhoeffer contends, imply not only the interdependence of man and society but also a third concept, namely, the concept of God. "It is in relation to persons and personal community," Bonhoeffer writes,

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[1] E. Bethge in *Foreword* to *The Communion of Saints*, p. 5.

"that the concept of God is formed."[1]

In Bonhoeffer's view the basic ontic relations establish "the norm and limit of all empirical sociality."[2] Consequently the Christian concept of the person as well as that of basic ontic relations cannot be derived from empirical social structures, but must be attained from the pure forms of sociality as they existed in the primal state. "We must look for a scheme," Bonhoeffer insists, "by which basic Christian relations are to be understood."[3] The central issue in this scheme is whether a person is to be understood in relation to another person or in atomist fashion.

Bonhoeffer begins his Christian social philosophy whith a basic definition which at once indicates the general trend it is to follow. "The Christian concept of the person," Bonhoeffer writes," may now be defined as constitutive of, and presupposed in, the concept of Christian community."[4]

Interpreted from a theological standpoint, this definition refers to man after the Fall, i.e., man who knows good and evil. Bonhoeffer claims that the preservation of the concrete individual concept of the person as an ultimate entity and the recognition of other subjects is possible only in the social sphere, but not in the epistemological sphere. The social sphere entails the experience of a barrier for the I. This barrier is a specifically ethical barrier, set in reality, in time. The moment 'the other' faces the 'I', the I must decide whether or not to respond to a claim made upon him by the other. The I, therefore, comes into being as a morally responsible person in time, in a value-filled moment of ethical decision. Bonhoeffer explains:

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 22. [2] _Ibid_., pp. 22-23. [3] _Ibid_., p. 26.

[4] _Ibid_., p. 28.

> It is not by my having a reasoning mind that I make universally valid decisions, but I enter into the reality of time by relating my concrete person in time in all its particularities to this obligation, by making myself morally responsible.[1]

In Bonhoeffer's view a person's self-awareness derives solely from the experience of the ethical barrier. In theological terms this barrier is evident in the distinction between man as God's creation and God as Creator. Bonhoeffer contends: "The Christian person arises solely from the absolute distinction between God and man; only from the experience of the barrier does the self-knowledge of the moral person arise."[2]

The ethical barrier exists not only between God and man, it exists also between man and 'the other' as another man. In order to prevent a misunderstanding of the Thou as the creator of the I as moral person, Bonhoeffer emphasizes that it is only through God's action that one man becomes the Thou for the other man. "The divine Thou creates the human Thou, and because God wills and makes it this human Thou is real, absolute, and holy, like the divine Thou."[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 30. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 31. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

The basic Christian relation, then, is the I-Thou relation, ontically as well as ethically. Only through the Thou does the I as person come into existence, not epistemologically, but morally. Bonhoeffer stresses this point and writes: "The Christian concept affirms the whole concrete person, body and soul, in its difference from all other beings in its moral relevance."[1]

Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Christian concept of the person and that of basic relations between persons may be summarized as follows: The person is the ultimate unity, unique, and separate from all other persons. Each I as person arises as God's creation, an image of the divine, in Bonhoeffer's words, "impenetrable Thou." It is only through this quality that each I becomes also a Thou, that is, the 'other' for another man. It is only through the 'other' as Thou, i.e., as God and as another man, that the I as person comes into existence. The answer to the question raised at the outset concerning the relationship between human spirituality and the origins of sociality is to be found in Bonhoeffer's assertion that the basic social category is the I-Thou relation, derived from the absolute distinction between God and man.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Bonhoeffer's Doctrine of the Primal State

Bonhoeffer addresses himself to a thorough discussion of the relationship between human spirituality and the origins of sociality by transposing it from empirical reality into the primal state. The primal state or the original community of God and man is in Bonhoeffer's opinion the only realm in which the connection between human spirituality and the origins of sociality can be demonstrated in its pure form. Bonhoeffer presents these pure forms of sociality as interpreted by theology, social philosophy, and sociology.

It is from the vantage point of theology that Bonhoeffer scrutinizes what he calls "the original state of man's religious and moral life."[1] He rejects at the outset the metaphysical definition of a person as "the unity of a self-conscious and spontaneously active spirit,"[2] though necessary, as insufficient for the Christian interpretation of man and reality. The essential fault is the failure to recognize the fundamental distinction between man in the primal state and man after the Fall. "Our aim," Bonhoeffer declares, "is to present the concept of the person which holds true within history, that is, after the Fall."[3] The Christian concept of the person, therefore, must reflect the reality of sin, death, and salvation.

As has been pointed out in the development of the I-Thou relation as the basic social category, the person is real only in sociality. The question arises: Is this assertion applicable to the primal state?

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 39. [2] _Ibid_., p. 39. [3] _Ibid_., p. 40.

Bonhoeffer maintains that not only the person but also the community is in immediate communion with God. "The immediate community of God," Bonhoeffer states," demands also the immediate community of men."[1] The primal state, then, is characterized by having an identity of purpose, namely, being a community of mutual love. God loves man and rules, while man loves God and obeys. Since in this community of love each man loves God in his own way, strife among men originated not after the Fall, but already in the primal state.

Man's unbroken communion with God is lost by man's failure to resist the power of sin. The immediate community of love existing between God and man, and man and man is destroyed. Bonhoeffer concludes his theological interpretation of the original community by stating:

> It is sufficient to note that divine and human community are in some way part of the original moral and spiritual life of man, and that means, part also of his future life, in accordance with the parallel between Adam and Christ, the primal state and the last things.

Bonhoeffer proceeds to discuss the problem of human spirituality and its relation to sociality from the standpoint of social philosophy. The human spirituality which according to Bonhoeffer's definition is of concern to social philosophy in its investigation into the origins of sociality is not identical with that spirituality which arises in the I-Thou relation through the experience of the ethical barrier. This kind of human spirituality, which Bonhoeffer calls "material spirituality," is the presupposition to the I-Thou relation. It is reflected in man's self-consciousness and self-determination, the constitutive elements forming the structural unity of the person. In other words, Bonhoeffer's notion of material spirituality refers to man as a rational being; i.e., thinking, willing, and feeling.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 40. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

Concerning the relation between human spirituality and sociality, Bonhoeffer claims that "man's entire so-called spirituality . . . is so constituted that it can only be seen possible in sociality."[1] The justification for this assertion, Bonhoeffer believes, can be found in two distinct aspects of personal being, namely, personal being as structurally open to sociality and its correlate, personal being as structurally closed to sociality.

Bonhoeffer adduces speech, will, and feeling to illustrate the structural openness of the person to sociality, i.e., the connection between man as a rational being and as a social being. It is through the social phenomenon of speech, arising in sociality--that is, in interaction with others--that man expresses himself, understands, and is understood. Language is the form in which man's rationality and sociality manifests itself, or, as Bonhoeffer writes:"With language a system of social spirituality is set within man."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 44.

The prerequisite for the individual will as "the united activity of self-determination and self- consciousness"[2] is in Bonhoeffer's view its dependence on and interaction with other wills. Only in sociality is the will possible and effective. However, as has been pointed out before, since each person is unique, individual wills are likely to differ and to clash. "Only in such encounters," Bonhoeffer remarks, "does the will reach its essential determination. As an isolated phenomenon the will is without meaning. Here again we come upon the basic significance of sociality for human spirituality."[3]

Human feelings, the most private aspect of man's spirituality, Bonhoeffer observes, also share at least in part in man's interaction with sociality.

In brief, it can be said that human spirituality, i.e., thinking, willing, and feeling, is possible only through man's structural openness to sociality. Resting on the basic I-Thou relation, human rationality and sociality are mutually depèndent.

In order to prevent the total submersion of the person in sociality Bonhoeffer asserts the individuality of the person by correlating the person's openness with the structural closedness to sociality. The essential problem, then, is the equilibrium in the relation between man as an individual and as a social being. Bonhoeffer attains the individual's separateness from sociality by regarding self-consciousness and self-determination as introversive acts. He explains: "The structural unity of the I is established as an experience in the experience of the Thou; it cannot be constituted by acts; acts rather presuppose it, and are directed towards it."[1] From the I-Thou relation as the basic social category Bonhoeffer cannot but argue for the interdependence between the individual as structurally open and closed and the social being, as follows:

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 46. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 46. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

> The individual personal spirit lives solely by virtue of sociality, and the 'social spirit' becomes real only in individual embodiment. One cannot speak of the priority either of personal or social being.[2]

Having described the structural openness and closedness of personal being, Bonhoeffer turns his attention to social being, which he regards as an "individual collective person." Though the collective person comes into existence only where individual persons exist, the collective person is more than the sum of all individuals participating in it. The collective person is a concrete unity, having the same structure as the individual person, i.e., structurally open and closed. Bonhoeffer characterizes the collective person by stating: "Social unity is experienced as a centre of acts from which the social unity operates. It is self-conscious, and has a will of its own, though only in the form of its members."[1] The collective person and the individual person, therefore, are dependent upon each other. Furthermore, the characteristics of the individual person which Bonhoeffer assigns to the collective person assure the establishment of the I-Thou relation between the collective and individual person. Consequently, the act of the collective person becomes simultaneously the act of its members.

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[1] Ibid., p. 49. [2] Ibid., p. 49.

Obviously Bonhoeffer's notion of the collective person is strongly influenced by his understanding of the Christian concept of the person. It is not surprising to find Bonhoeffer answering the question about the theological significance with regard to the relationship between individual and collective person as follows:

> God does not desire a history of individual men, but the history of the community of men . . . In his sight the community and the individual are present at the same moment, and rest in one another. The structures of the individual and the collective unit are the same. Upon these basic relations rests the concept of the religious community and the church.[2]

The relation between individual and collective person manifests itself in different social structures. "The study of the structures of communities and the acts of wills that constitute them"[3] is in Bonhoeffer's view the task of sociology.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 51. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 52. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

Social communities are communities of wills. Since there exists among separate and different individuals an inherent conflict of wills, the opposition among wills can only be overcome by the cooperation of wills, thereby establishing the unity of will of the community. This unity of will refers to what is intended; it does not entail the unity of persons. "Community of will and unity of will," Bonhoeffer insists, "are built upon the inner separateness of I and Thou."[1]

Bonhoeffer classifies social communities according to the types of will which constitute the social community. Only wills which are 'with' (as contrasted to 'beside' or 'against') one another can form a social structure. This structure is either willed as an end in itself or as a means to an end. In the first type of social structure there is what Bonhoeffer calls a "will for meaning," having a "structure of meaning;" while the second type is characterized by the rational "purposive will," having a "structure of purpose." Bonhoeffer consequently asserts: "Community can therefore be constituted either as a means by a rational will with a pure purpose, or by a will for meaning which acknowledges the value of community as such."[2] Bonhoeffer adopts Tönnies'[3] terminology in order to distinguish community (a social structure as an end in itself) from society (a social structure as a means to an end). "If community is essential Life-community," Bonhoeffer reasons,"a society is an association in rational action."[1] The underlying basis of an association is contractual agreement among its members. Both types, Bonhoeffer declares, do not exist in pure form.

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[1] Ibid. p. 54. [2] Ibid., p. 56.

[3] Ferdinand Tönnies, German sociologist (1855-1936) whose distinction between "community" and "society" was based on the contention that human social development is from natural and organic to purposive structures.

Different types of social structures can be reached not only from the determination of the direction of wills but also from the relative strength of individual wills within a community. Bonhoeffer enumerates four types.

The first type is an association of power in which the will in power dominates all other wills. In this type of absolute authoritarian association, community is not possible.

The second type is an association of genuine authority through which the community is for the most part realized, because there is, as Bonhoeffer points out, "presupposed an understanding of the command by the one who obeys."[2]

As a third type of association Bonhoeffer discusses the cooperative. Since the cooperative is based on the legal equality of its members, the concept of the community does not apply to the cooperative. The cooperative, Bonhoeffer insists, "has no sociological significance as a necessary correlate of the concept of authority."[3] Only the association of authority which can be present in community as well as in society is, in Bonhoeffer's view, of sociological importance.

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[1] Ibid., p. 58. [2] Ibid., p. 58. [3] Ibid., p. 59.

The mass as the fourth type of social structure does not belong to any of the above-mentioned types, determined either by the direction or by the strength of wills. Bonhoeffer finds the lack of a real social bond among wills to be the reason for this special status of the mass. Since wills in the mass should be considered as kinds of mechanical forces reacting to stimuli, the bond among wills in the mass is purely accidental. This fact leads Bonhoeffer to describe the mass as "a unity which is not supported by the differences between persons and which therefore cannot have any duration. It is the simplest social structure and it gives rise to the most powerful experience of unity."[1]

Bonhoeffer distinguishes between the relation of community and society as temporal social structures to eternity. The notions "will for meaning" and "structure of meaning" which Bonhoeffer associates with the concept of community must be understood as related to value and not to purpose. The community as an end in itself is not willed by men, but it is willed by God. This idea of community as a structure of values assumes a key role in Bonhoeffer's development of the theory of mandates, as will be shown later. Bonhoeffer admits that the community may have a rational telos, but he stresses the fact that it is not contained within the community itself. Therefore, he claims: "Genuine community, in marriage, the family, the nation, is from God to God, and its _telos_ lies on the boundaries of history."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 60.

The identity of the duration of community and history, Bonhoeffer hastens to add, refers not to community as an empirical fact, but to community as an idea. The duration of a society, however, as a means to an end is limited by the realization of its purpose. "Thus," Bonhoeffer writes, "the idea of a concrete society as purely teleological is necessarily intra-historical, and temporally conditioned."[2] The mass, Bonhoeffer asserts, exists only in time, since it is completely determined by the temporal moment.

Within the framework of his sociological investigation of social communities Bonhoeffer now advances the notion of objective spirit.

Earlier, in the discussion of the relationship between human spirituality and sociality from the point of view of social philosophy, Bonhoeffer had developed the notion of the individual collective person. Now he supplements this concept of the collective person by the concept of objective spirit.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 61. [2] _Ibid_., p. 62.

The objective spirit arises as an independent structure wherever wills unite. "The persons," Bonhoeffer declares, "thus experience their community as something real outside themselves, disengaging itself from them, and rising above them."[1] In the objective spirit the life of the single individual and that of all individuals constituting the community is objectivised. The objective spirit as a new, separate, and independent unity interacts with each individual and with them all, and so serves as a principle of conduct. Moreover, Bonhoeffer considers the objective spirit as "the historical and social turning-point between past and future."[2] By this, Bonhoeffer means that the objectivising of the present moment in the life of the community by the objective spirit turns the present moment into a past moment fixed in objectivity, i.e., in history. Bonhoeffer provides the following explanation concerning the role of the objective spirit in the conflict between the present and the past moment:

> In the objective spirit there is the element of historical movement forward and the expansive element. The first is the reality of its historicity, the second the reality of its sociality. Objective spirit is thus the bond between the sense of history and the sense of community, between the intention of a community in time and its intention in space.[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 65. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 66. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Objective spirit arises in communities as well as in societies. In a community as a structure of value, the objective spirit attains a value of its own and has a personal character. In a society as a structure of purpose, the objective spirit is nothing more than a means to an end. It has no personal character, since the person is never only a means to an end.

Bonhoeffer, as has been shown, attributes to the objective spirit, as an independent structure beyond and above the community, the characteristics of the person. Moreover, Bonhoeffer claims that the objective spirit is not only self-conscious and self-active, but it also has a body. The body of the objective spirit is experienced subjectively. Bonhoeffer elucidates by referring to the interdependence between the physical body and the I, and states: "In this sense the centre of action of the community experiences all its members, which have affirmed it . . . and in this sense has its 'body' at its disposal." [1]

In brief, the objective spirit as a new, separate, and independent unity confronts the individual and the collective person as community and society. The objective spirit, then, is the social spirit through which the subjective spirits experience their collective person.

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[1] Ibid., p. 69.

Summary

Bonhoeffer contends that social community in its pure form already exists in the primal state. Consequently, Bonhoeffer approaches the problem of sociality (the relationship between man's original spirituality and the origins of sociality) from a theological, a socio-philosophical, and a sociological perspective.

Underlying Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the primal state is the general proposition that the person is real only in sociality. Viewed from a theological standpoint, this proposition has a twofold meaning. First, it means that man is created as a free spiritual being directly related to God, his Creator. Second, it means that the real community of God and man requires the immediate community of man, i.e., the social community. The original community in the primal state, then, is a community of immediate and mutual love. Divine and human community, or in other words, man's spirituality and sociality, belong together.

Bonhoeffer socio-philosophical interpretation of the relations between man's spirituality and sociality is based upon what he calls man's material spirituality. Man's self-consciousness and self-determination establish his structural unity as a person. Man's structural unity is open as well as closed to sociality. Though the individual person remains always the ultimate unit, it is only through interaction with others that the I comes into being. Consequently, Bonhoeffer argues, there is no priority of either personal or social being. From this basis Bonhoeffer develops his concept of the community as a collective person, having the same structure as the individual person. The collective person is the center of acts of the individual persons constituting it. The collective person is, therefore, a social unity and must be regarded as an individual person.

Bonhoeffer describes the pure form of social community which exists in the primal state as being a community which is constituted by reciprocal will. He classifies social communities from a sociological point of view according to a) the direction of the will, and b) the relative strength of the will expressed in them.

Concerning the direction of will in social communities, Bonhoeffer distinguishes between community as willed as an end in itself, amd a community willed as a means to an end. For the first type Bonhoeffer chooses the term "community" which, he claims, is willed by God. For the second type he selects the term "society" which is willed by men and based upon contractual agreement.

The relative strength of wills in social communities is exemplified by the rule of power, or of authority, or by the balance of power in the cooperative. The mass, the simplest social structure, absorbs the individuality of the person and therefore does not belong to any of the types mentioned.

A social community as a community of will possesses what Bonhoeffer calls an objective spirit. This phenomenon arises as a new, separate, and independent social spirit. Through it, the community is experienced by its members as something real outside and beyond themselves. Though objective spirit arises in community as well as in society, it is only objective spirit in the community which has personal, that is, moral character. It is through objective spirit that the community as collective person interacts with its members and with other communities as collective persons.

Bonhoeffer follows up his arguments for the interdependence of human spirituality and sociality and the demonstration of the pure forms of sociality existing in the primal state (in the community of love) with a discussion of the Fall as the origin of empirical communities in history.

Before accompanying Bonhoeffer across the threshold of the Fall into the realm of history in which empirical communities exist, it seems advisable to recall that Bonhoeffer writes not as a social philosopher or sociologist, but as a theologian. Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Fall as the beginning of the communio peccatorum, the old mankind, is the prerequisite for his Christology and the concept of the communio sanctorum, the new mankind. Only by taking both interpretations together will it become clear that Bonhoeffer's view concerning man's essential nature--whether as in individual person or as a member of a collective person or of mankind--is determined by man's relationship to God. It is this theological perspective which must be kept in mind throughout the exposition of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy.

Fall and Empirical Community

What distinguishes the community after the Fall from the community before the Fall? In order to answer this question the notion of the Fall must first be elucidated. The Fall is the problem of sin. "Sin is," Bonhoeffer writes, on every occasion an unfathomable and inexcusable contradiction of God, arising out of the free will."[1] Through the Fall, love, the basis of the community in the primal state, is changed to selfishness. Egoism, then, is the new spiritual basis of empirical communities. The result is the individual's ethical isolation and his knowledge of good and evil. Man has acquired a conscience. But the problem of sin and therefore of man's guilt incurred before God pertains not only to the individual person but to the collective person and to the whole of mankind. Mankind is man's fellowship with men; it is, as Bonhoeffer terms it, the collective human person. "Mankind is the universal community comprising all communities."[2] The phenomenon of sin, therefore, is simultaneously individual and universal. The justification for this claim, Bonhoeffer believes, can be derived from the basic social category, the I-Thou relation. Bonhoeffer makes this observation:

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 81. [2] _Ibid_., p. 84.

> Thus the perception that in sin one is to the highest degree alone leads to the other perception that one's sin is to the widest extent shared, so that of inner necessity we are once again directed from the one to the others, without whom the existence and nature of the one could not be understood.[1]

In Bonhoeffer's view the solution of the problem of the inseparability of the individual and community in the state of sin "depends upon finding the general act in the individual's sinful act, without making the one the basis for the other."[2] This is not possible, Bonhoeffer claims, by a biological explanation of the relationship between the individual and the race, since it leads from the concept of original sin to that of sin as an inherited natural defect of mankind. Only by viewing mankind from an ethical perspective, that is, mankind consisting of self-conscious, self-active and therefore morally responsible individuals, can the individuality and the universality of sin be explained. Every act is in Bonhoeffer's view "at once an individual act, and one in which mankind's general sin is brought to life again."[3] Both individual sin and universal sin must be seen together; the peccator pessimus and the communio peccatorum belong to one another as separate individuals and in ethical solidarity as collective person. It is on account of the social character of the sinful act that it is at one and the same time contrary to the individual's own destiny and to the destiny of mankind. In this way the experience of ethical solidarity arises as a consequence of the individual's experience of sociality.

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[1] Ibid., p. 72. [2] Ibid., p. 79. [3] Ibid., p. 79.

Bonhoeffer's discussion of the social character of sin culminates in the question: "Is it possible to regard the collective person as an ethical person?"[1]

When Bonhoeffer speaks of the collective person he refers to the community--ranging from the smallest to the largest unit--which is addressed by God and has fallen into guilt by disregarding God's call. Between the guilt of the individual and the guilt of mankind Bonhoeffer poses the guilt of the collective person, the empirical community. "The centre of action," Bonhoeffer re-emphasizes, "lies in the collective person. Thus the collective guilt of a community is something else than guilt as a social phenomenon in the community."[2] The essence of the collective guilt of the community is such that the general sinful act is represented in the collective person as the center of individual sinful acts. The collective person is therefore an ethical person and morally responsible. However, it should be noted that, although the collective person acts through its individual members, the decisive fact is that not all but some members act or sin in such a way as to realize vicariously the intention of the community.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 82. [2] _Ibid_., p. 83.

The relationship between the individual and the collective person, Bonhoeffer stresses, should not be one of blind obedience to the will of the collective person, but should be determined by the decision of the conscience of the individual. "He must know himself," Bonhoeffer demands, "and make decisions as an inner unity, . . . and struggle through to an integrated decision of the will. Only upon such integrated persons is the ethical community built."[1]

The question arises: what does Bonhoeffer understand by an integrated person? It is generally agreed that man as an individual is not only a spiritual being but a rational and physical being as well. Furthermore, man is a social being.

Bonhoeffer's view of man as a spiritual being, specifically as a Christian in the sanctorum communio, has been presented earlier in his "Ecclesiology." His doctrine of the primal state established the mutual dependence of human spirituality and sociality. From the Fall, Bonhoeffer derived the origin and nature of the empirical community.

The problem now is to show, within the context of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy, his understanding of the individual as an integrated person, not as being exclusively a member of the Christian community but as being wholly and completely in the secular world.

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[1] Ibid., p. 84.

CHAPTER V

THE INDIVIDUAL AS INTEGRATED PERSON

To integrate generally means to unify, to form various aspects into a harmonious whole. The integrated person, Bonhoeffer claims, has an inner unity which determines his decisions and actions. The integrated person knows himself. What, then, is this inner unity which characterizes an integrated person? The answer to the question is to be found in man's self-understanding. To know himself, man must ask and answer the age-old question: Who am I?

In Bonhoeffer's view man cannot understand himself through himself. Man remains fallen man, individually and collectively. Man understands himself and becomes man only through Christ who exists as community, i.e., the church. The essential idea is that man understands himself only with reference to God and community. Consequently Bonhoeffer's notion of the integrated person seems to refer in its most comprehensive meaning to a man who is aware that his very existence is sustained by God and who depends also on his fellow human beings.

Bonhoeffer's Critique of Contemporary Interpretations of Man

In his inaugural lecture[1] Bonhoeffer takes issue with the interpretations given by modern philosophy and theology concerning the problem of man's self-understanding. Only from a fixed point, Bonhoeffer believes, can man understand himself. This fixed point, in which the essence of man is revealed, is either man's achievement (Werk) or his limitations (Grenzen). Furthermore, since it is man who asks about himself, the problem of transcendence arises. The problem of transcendence concerns the question whether or not it is possible for man to go beyond himself in order to understand his own being as man, to answer the question: Who am I?

Concerning the problem of transcendence, Bonhoeffer notes:"With the question of himself, man comes up against the limit of transcendence. He sees himself transcended in himself."[2] Either man recognizes this transcendence as a limit which he cannot overcome, or he draws the transcendent questioning I into the question. This means, Bonhoeffer explains, "to take possession of its own I, to see in the coming-to-itself of the I the central occurence of all intellectual happenings."[3] The two basic approaches are discernible in philosophy as well as in theology.

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[1] Bonhoeffer's inaugural lecture "Man in Contemporary Philosophy and Theology" was given at Berlin University on July 31,1930. It is reprinted in No Rusty Swords, pp. 50-69.

[2] No Rusty Swords, p. 51. [3] Ibid., p. 51.

Bonhoeffer illustrates the philosophical interpretation of man by reference to Scheler and Heidegger. Both philosophers maintain that man understands himself from his achievements, his potentialities. Man understands himself through himself. However, Bonhoeffer criticizes Scheler for separating "the _essentia_ from the _existentia_. He was able to conceive the continuity of human nature, but not of human existence."[1] In Scheler's view, Bonhoeffer thinks, man remains within himself. Bonhoeffer objects to Heidegger's interpretation for the same reason because "in the last resort it is man himself who is answering the question of man."[2]

Tillich and Grisebach represent the second approach to the understanding of man, i.e., from his limitations. Man understands himself by recognizing the limit of an insurmountable transcendence. Tillich refers to this limit as the incursion of the infinite, while Grisebach speaks of the encounter with a concrete Thou as the limit of man. Bonhoeffer rejects these views because they represent a limitation drawn by man himself. Bonhoeffer remarks:

> In the very possibility of making a limit I demonstrate the infinity of my possibilities, behind which I can no longer retreat . . . Man has in himself essentially no limits, he is infinite in himself.[3]

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 54. [2] _Ibid_., p. 57. [3] _Ibid_., p. 60.

From the theological point of view, Bonhoeffer maintains, philosophy's interpretation of man, either from his achievements or his limitations, is nothing more than man's self-understanding derived from his achievements. "The thought imprisoned in itself," Bonhoeffer says,"is the true expression of man questioning himself _in statu corruptionis_."[1] In Bonhoeffer's view the essential difference between the philosophical and the theological approach concerning the problem of man is to be found in theology's contention that man cannot understand himself through himself but only as man standing before God.

Bonhoeffer refers to his own teacher Holl for the theological interpretation of man from the perspective of achievement. The possibility of man understanding himself in relation to the transcendent, i.e., God, Holl claims, is given by man's conscience. The conscience is the place of man's direct relationship with God. "He understands himself in the reflection on his conscience in which God encounters him."[2] But Bonhoeffer denies that man as a finite being can unite himself directly with the infinite.

The understanding of man's existence as seen from his limitations finds its theological interpretation in Gogarten's notion of man addressed by the absolute claim of the neighbor. "Man perceives the claim of the neighbour only as absolute when the absolute claim of God in Christ has encountered him and has given him the answer to his question about himself."[1] Bonhoeffer refutes Gogarten's view of man's limitation as being based on man's self-understanding, his reflection on himself. The real limit of man, Bonhoeffer thinks, is God's revelation. The question of man cannot be separated from the question of God. Only in direct reference to God can man understand himself. Bonhoeffer writes:

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 60. [2] _Ibid_., p. 61.

> He sees his unity grounded in the Word of God that comes to him, and whose content is judgment and grace. Here man recognizes that his nature is . . . determined by 'Thou art under sin' or 'Thou art under grace.'[2]

Man under sin is the solitary individual who belongs to the fallen world, the fallen mankind of Adam. Man is under grace through God's revelation in Christ, his death and resurrection. Man, as has been pointed out earlier, belongs at once to the old mankind of Adam and to the new mankind of Christ. Bonhoeffer remarks about the duality of man's nature:

> The man who is addressed by the Word of God in the death and resurrection of Christ, i.e. the Christian, understands his present being as determined from two sides. First and decisively by his future, which is Christ alone, but secondly by his past, which is Adam, and which must ever afresh be surrendered in the death of Christ. The man in Christ is still the tempted one so long as the manhood of Adam remains in power.[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 63. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 66. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Man's Basic Right

The integrated person understands himself only with reference to God and community. How does this interdependence of the individual person and community affect the most fundamental right of any man: the right to live?

Bonhoeffer addresses himself to this basic problem of life in a public lecture entitled: "The Right to Self-Assertion." Bonhoeffer gave this lecture at the height of the world-wide economic crisis of the early thirties. During this period not only individuals but whole groups of people and nations faced the severity of the struggle for existence.

Bonhoeffer contends that the individual's right to assert himself is synomynous with the right to live. However, this fundamental right does not entail man's absolute freedom, but demands freedom with responsibility. To live means that man is set within the context of nature and history. Consequently man is bound to other beings and must therefore recognize their claims to assert themselves. The justification for the individual's right to assert himself can only be derived from his accepting responsibility before God and his fellow men. Bonhoeffer stresses the importance of responsibility in these words:

> Only from responsibility does life derive its right to self-assertion, not because life belongs to me, but rather because it belongs to the community, the others, to my fellow man . . . man is free only in death, the right to self-assertion means the right to death, freedom to death, not to the free death of self-destruc-

> tion, but freedom to self-sacrifice. That is the conclusion of the idea of life as responsibility, as being bound to history and community, that life has right only through self-sacrifice.[1]

Jesus Christ is the basis for Bonhoeffer's contention that man's right to self-assertion must be derived from man's preparedness for sacrificial death. Christ's willingness to die for all mankind is the shining example. Only the freedom to die for mankind gives the individual the right to assert himself, makes him free for life.

Consequently another feature of the integrated person is his recognition that life is not centered upon one's own self, but that it is one of responsibility for others. "The individual," Bonhoeffer insists, "belongs essentially and absolutely with the other, according to the will of God, even though, or because, each is completely separate from the other."[2]

Thus far the notion of the integrated person has been scrutinized with regard to his self-understanding and his right to live, to self-assertion. Responsibility has been clearly established as the central issue and the determining factor in the life of the integrated person. Responsibility, then, determines the actions of the individual. Actions spring from an integrated decision of the will. The will is, in Bonhoeffer's opinion, the united activity of man's self-consciousness and self-determination.

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[1] "Nur aus der Verantwortung entnimmt darum das Leben sein Recht auf Selbstbehauptung, nicht weil es mir gehört, sondern weil es der Gemeinschaft, dem Andern, dem Bruder Mensch gehört . . . der Mensch ist frei nur im Tode, Recht auf Selbstbehauptung heisst Recht auf den Tod, Freiheit zum Tod, nun aber nicht zu dem freien Tod der Selbstvernichtung, sondern Freiheit zum Opfer. Das ist die Vollendung des Gedankens vom Leben als Verantwortung, als Gebundensein an Geschichte und Gemeinschaft, dass dieses Leben nur Recht hat durchs Opfer." Gesammelte Schriften, III, pp. 265-66. (translation mine)

[2] The Communion of Saints, p. 37.

Generally speaking, man is a product of biological reproduction (heredity) and environment. Man is placed not only within a particular time-and-space reference, he also occupies a certain station within the order of a particular class and society. Consequently man's decisions are influenced by many factors. Since men are not equal and have different views concerning life's values, generally and specifically, social relations are characterized by the clash of individual wills. To determine which action within a given situation is a responsible action and therefore right, and which is irresponsible and therefore wrong, man must be free to choose among alternatives. Thus, responsibility presupposes that the integrated person must have not only freedom of decision, but must also have a criterion for deciding what is right and wrong, good and evil.

Two problems must now be investigated in order to shed additional light on Bonhoeffer's notion of the integrated person. First, what is Bonhoeffer's understanding of the relationship between responsibility and freedom? Second, which criterion should determine man's decisions and actions?

Freedom and Responsibility

In The Communion of Saints Bonhoeffer says that the ethical concept of the person is the basic concept of social relations. Even in the primal state man was set in the sphere of moral reality by the claim of the other person. The individual had to make a decision, and thereby became a morally responsible person. However, it was Bonhoeffer's aim to present the Christian view of man as he exists in history, in the midst of the world. But the Christian, as has been pointed out several times, belongs not only to the world, he also belongs to God through Jesus Christ as the center of human existence. Man's life, then, is one of responsibility towards men and God.

Bonhoeffer makes it clear that man's life is not divided into a religious sphere pertaining to man as a Christian and to a profane sphere for historical man. "In Jesus Christ," Bonhoeffer emphasizes, "God and man became one, and therefore through Him in the actions of the Christians 'secular' and 'Christian' become one also." Responsibility concerns the whole man; it is based on man's relation to Jesus Christ.

In Bonhoeffer's view responsibility and freedom are corresponding concepts. "Responsibility presupposes freedom and freedom can consists only in responsibility."[2] The

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[1] Ethics, p. 220. [2] Ibid., p. 248.

freedom of the individual rests on the fact that he alone bears the responsibility for his deeds. Man's acceptance of responsibility does not mean that he acts as an isolated individual. The responsible man partakes fully in life. The individual acts in the freedom of his personal responsibility as a member of humanity and as a Christian. It is from this perspective that Bonhoeffer describes the responsible life.

Two factors condition man's responsible life. First, the fact that life is bound to man and God; second, man's freedom.

The meaning of Bonhoeffer's statement: life is bound to man and God will become increasingly clear in the following exposition of Bonhoeffer's thoughts concerning the notions of responsibility, freedom, obedience, and responsible life. At present the following remarks may serve as clarification: Life belongs to man as God's creation. Life belongs to God as the Creator of all that exists. The life of man after the Fall is in Bonhoeffer's view man's natural life. True life is restored to man through Jesus Christ. Life has recovered its unity. "In the body of Jesus Christ," Bonhoeffer writes," God is united with humanity, the whole of humanity is accepted by God, and the world is reconciled with God."[1] The first condition of responsible life, therefore, is possible only through Jesus Christ as the mediator between God and man.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

Man's freedom is the second condition for responsible life. "Freedom," Bonhoeffer states," displays itself in the self-examination of life and action and in the venture of a concrete decision."[1]

Bonhoeffer's understanding of freedom exhibits the form of a dialectical movement from thesis over antithesis to synthesis. The thesis refers to man's original freedom as God's creature. The antithesis is exemplified by what Bonhoeffer calls the relative freedom of natural life, which man retains after the Fall. The synthesis is the supplementation of relative freedom by absolute freedom which man receives in his reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer, however, stresses the distinction between relative and absolute freedom by warning: "It is of crucial importance that this relative freedom shall not be confused with an absolute freedom for God and one's neighbour such as only the imparted word of God can create and bestow."[2]

Original Freedom

The creation of man as told in Genesis 1:26 is Bonhoeffer's starting point for his interpretation of human freedom. Man's freedom, Bonhoeffer claims, is not a quality, a possession, or a form of existence of man. Man's freedom originates from God's freedom to create man in his image. "If the Creator wills to create his own image," Bonhoeffer writes,"he must create it in freedom."[1] Man is like the Creator and therefore man is free. Freedom is a relationship. God is free for man and man is free for God. But man is also free for his fellow men created in the divine image. "Being free means 'being free for the other,' because the other has bound me to him. Only in relationship with the other am I free."[2] Man's freedom consists not only in 'being free for', it also entails man's 'freedom from' the rest of the world. God gives man the mandate to rule over the world to which he is bound by his creatureliness (Geschöpflichkeit). Man, therefore, is wholly in the world.

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[1] Ibid., p. 224. [2] Ibid., p. 145.

Man's earthliness is emphasized in the second account of man's creation in Genesis 2:7. Man's existence, therefore, is characterized by his dependence upon and limitation by others and his being there for others. Man is free by being created in God's image, but his freedom is limited by his creatureliness. Man loses his creatureliness by disobeying the command of God. Man's original freedom, based on his obedience to God's will, is lost through his wrong use of freedom. "Through the Fall the 'creature' becomes 'nature'. The direct dependence of the creature on God is replaced by the relative freedom of natural life."[1]

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[1] Creation and Fall, p. 36. [2] Ibid., p. 37.

Relative Freedom of Natural Life

Bonhoeffer defines natural life as the form of life preserved by God after the Fall and directed towards the coming of Christ. The natural comprises the fallen world, the whole of mankind. Fallen man, however, is still man and therefore free.

By means of his reason fallen man apprehends the natural as universally established. "The natural and reason," Bonhoeffer explains, "are related to one another as the form of being and the form of consciousness of the preserved life."[2] The relative freedom of natural life consists in man's freedom or independence to use or abuse this freedom. In the right use of freedom man's reason as well as his will to live direct him towards the natural, i.e., that what is in accordance with life, with human nature. "The natural," Bonhoeffer declares, "is the safeguarding of life against the unnatural."[3] The unnatural is the abuse of freedom which results in the violation or even destruction of the natural, of life. The unnatural, which in Bonhoeffer's words "consists essentially in organization,"[4] is the substitution of the natural by an absolute entity which is arbitrarily posited by man to be the source of the natural. In the struggle between the unnatural and the natural, Bonhoeffer believes, life will in the end prevail.

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[1] _Ethics_, p. 145. [2] _Ibid_., p. 146. [3] _Ibid_., p. 147.
[4] _Ibid_. p. 148.

How does man in the relative freedom of his natural life decide what is good and what is evil or what is natural and what is unnatural?

Ethical atomism, Bonhoeffer wrote in The Communion of Saints, is the consequence of the Fall. Each man has now his own conscience and therefore knows what is good and evil. The conscience, then, is the criterion by which man in natural life decides his actions.

Bonhoeffer's interpretation of conscience reveals again the christocentric orientation of his thoughts. "Conscience," Bonhoeffer writes, "can just as well be the ultimate prop for self-justification as the point at which Christ strikes home at man through the law."[1]

Two aspects or forms of conscience are to be considered: one referring to man's self-justification; the other referring to Christ.

Regarding the concept of conscience in general Bonhoeffer maintains that man's conscience is not God's voice, but it is rather man's defence against the voice of God. The conscience points towards the voice of God contrary to man's will. Conscience as man's reflection upon himself simultaneously directs man towards God. The conflict between the two forms or directions of man's conscience is, in Bonhoeffer's opinion, the problem of the Christian conscience. "If being in Christ is purely intentional, if it is being-directed upon Christ," Bonhoeffer maintains, "reflexion on the self is obviously excluded."[1]

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 72.

The conscience as man's means for self-justification, Bonhoeffer claims, is man's concern with himself. After the Fall man lives not only in disunion with God and other men, but he lives in disunion with himself. Man, separated from God and knowing good and evil, establishes unity with himself as the universal good. The conscience, Bonhoeffer states, "is the call to unity of man with himself."[2] Man's conscience, then, is the criterion of good and evil. Man has become his own lawgiver and judge. Separated from God, man finds the unity of his existence in himself. Man is autonomous, _sicut deus_. The conscience of fallen man, which Bonhoeffer calls the natural conscience of man, is man's awareness of his lost unity and his means of self-justification before God.

In contrast to the natural conscience of autonomous man the "liberated conscience" of the Christian does not find the point of unity of his existence in himself but in Christ. The natural conscience, Bonhoeffer asserts,"is overcome by the conscience which is set free in Jesus Christ and which summons me to unity with myself in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has become my conscience."[1] The Christian finds unity with himself by giving himself completely to God and his fellow men. Responsible action and sharing in the guilt of his neighbor characterize the liberated conscience of the Christian. The relationship between conscience and responsibility must be such that the individual's unity with himself is preserved and that his action is in obedience with the law of love for God and neighbor. In a conflict between conscience and responsibility man's final decision is for Christ as the ultimate unity of conscience and responsibility. "Thus responsibility is bound by conscience, but conscience is set free by responsibility."[2]

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[1] _Act and Being_, p. 171. [2] _Ethics_, p. 24.

With the defection from God man turned from faith to doubt. In natural life both forms of conscience, the natural and the liberated, have the same basic function: to safeguard human existence. The conscience, as has been shown above, has its origin and goal in man's autonomy, in his relative freedom of natural life. "Man must decide for himself what is good by using his conscience and his knowledge of good and evil . . . For God has given man a free will to decide what he will do."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 244. [2] Ibid., p. 247.

Relative Freedom and Absolute Freedom

In the preceding section the meaning of Bonhoeffer's phrase: life is bound to man and to God has become clearer by his distinction between the natural conscience of man and the liberated conscience of the Christian. More clarity may be provided by the following presentation of Bonhoeffer's views concerning man's relative and absolute freedom.

Jesus Christ is again the focal point of Bonhoeffer's thoughts concerning the problem of natural life. The question of life is for Bonhoeffer the question of good. Life as an ethical problem, Bonhoeffer insists, cannot be decided by the application of an absolute criterion of good. The good must be determined by the decision and action of man in the midst of the historical situation. But through man's bondage to natural life his freedom to act is only relative. Natural life is overcome and absolute freedom is attained through God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

Man lives in the natural which through Christ becomes the penultimate. The penultimate is Christ's preparing the way towards the ultimate, the justification of man before God.

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[1] The Cost of Discipleship, p. 80.

In the penultimate man shares in the new life, the life of Christ, and therefore in absolute freedom. Jesus Christ is the life; in Bonhoeffer's words, "the origin, the essence and the goal of all life and of our life."[1] Though bound to natural life, the actions of the Christian derive from his unity with God and the world through Jesus Christ. Consequently Bonhoeffer argues: "Good is not a quality of life. It is 'life' itself. To be good is to 'live'."[2]

To live means man's total response to the Word of God in contrast to man's partial response to certain principles. Only in total response to God's Word is man entirely free for total responsibility. "There is responsibility to God and for God, to men and for men; it is always responsibility for the sake of Jesus Christ, and in this alone it is responsibility for my own life."[3]

The source of man's absolute freedom of responsible action is his obligation to God and men. The source of man's relative freedom of action are ethical norms, standards, and laws established by man's reason. The life of autonomous man without Christ is one of relative freedom only. "In consequence of false abstractions," Bonhoeffer asserts," [man] is now held fast in conflicts which must eternally remain unresolved; practical action cannot pass beyond these conflicts and it is wasted and worn away by them." Man's relation to

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[1] *Ethics*, p. 218. [2] *Ibid*., p. 221. [3] *Ibid*., p. 223.
[4] *Ibid*., p. 220.

Christ alone, then, determines his relative or absolute freedom. Natural life as the penultimate is thus the realm of man's responsible life.

Responsible Life

Man's responsible life in the penultimate as an obligation to God and men displays two essential features: deputyship or vicarious action, and correspondence with reality.

Deputyship is the action of one man in the place of another. It is possible only on account of the Christian's absolute freedom for responsible action. "Responsibility," Bonhoeffer maintains, "is fundamentally a matter of deputyship."[1] Since Jesus Christ lived in deputyship for all mankind, Bonhoeffer argues, all human life is lived in deputyship. Bonhoeffer explains:

> Deputyship and therefore also responsibility lies only in the complete surrender of one's own life to the other man. Only the selfless man lives responsibly, and this means that only the selfless man lives.[2]

Responsible life is life which is in correspondence with reality. Correspondence with reality is in Bonhoeffer's view correspondence with Jesus Christ as the center of all reality. Not a universal principle but Jesus Christ guides the actions of the responsible man. It is from this perspective that the responsible man considers what is necessary and right in a given situation. "That action which is in accordance with Christ," Bonhoeffer categorically declares, "is action which is in accordance with reality."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 224. [2] Ibid., p. 225.

But man, being bound to life, is limited in his actions by his creatureliness; and man's responsibility is limited by God and other men. Consequently man must decide on his actions in relation to God and men within the scope of human knowledge. He cannot know whether his actions correspond with reality, i.e., with Christ, or not. Man must leave the final judgment to God. "The responsible man," Bonhoeffer remarks, "commits his actions into the hands of God and lives by God's grace and favour."[2] God and men, then, are the origin and limit of man's responsible life.

How can man lead a responsible life as envisioned by Bonhoeffer in the complexity and perplexity of the modern world?

From a general and mostly theoretical discussion of the relationship between freedom and responsibility Bonhoeffer turns to a specific and actual problem: the relationship between free responsibility and obedience in modern society.

Organization and security are the two outstanding characteristics of modern life. The ordinary individual in a highly complex social order, Bonhoeffer asserts, leads a life which is regulated to such a degree that he has very little freedom and responsibility of his own. In everyday life responsibility has been generally replaced by obedience and duty. The individual, Bonhoeffer claims, "has been robbed of the creative moral power, freedom."[1] Freedom of decision and therefore responsibility are restricted to very few people.

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[1] Ibid., p. 229. [2] Ibid., p. 234.

In spite of the severe limitations which the general desire for security imposes upon personal freedom and thus responsibility, Bonhoeffer believes, that genuine responsibility is to be found in the relation of man to man. Bonhoeffer speaks specifically about those relations which exemplify the dependence of one person upon another. He writes: "Where man meets man . . . there arises genuine responsibility, and these responsible relationships cannot be supplanted by any general regulation or routine."[2] Man owes obedience to what is demanded of him, but he has free responsibility for carrying out his task. Obedience is rendered in free responsibility. Bonhoeffer summarizes his view regarding the relationship between freedom and obedience by stating: "Obedience without freedom is slavery; freedom without obedience is arbitrary self-will. Obedience restrains freedom; and freedom enobles obedience."[3] Consequently only in responsibility are obedience and freedom realized.

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[1] Ibid., p. 251. [2] Ibid., p. 251. [3] Ibid., p. 252.

Bonhoeffer's phrase: life is bound to man and God, finds its final explanation in the fact that God and men are the origin and limit of man's responsible life.

The individual as integrated person has been the subject matter of this chapter. Two distinctly different interpretations emerged as applicable to the notion of the integrated person. One interpretation starts from man's autonomy; the other from the Christian view of man. The first interpretation is represented by Bonhoeffer's concepts of relative freedom and of natural conscience; the second refers to the absolute freedom and the liberated conscience of the Christian.

According to the first interpretation the following definition may be offered: The integrated person is the autonomous individual who lives in the world without Christ. He achieves his inner unity through self-reflection aided by his conscience and his reason. Being true to himself, the autonomous individual is an integrated person. The individual, knowing himself, acts as a responsible moral person and as a social being in obligation to the norms and values of the society in which he lives.

The Christian definition of the integrated person is centered upon the relationship between the individual and Christ. The Christian finds his unity with himself in Christ by faith. Christ is the life in which the Christian, living fully in the world, partakes in responsibility before God and men. "Christian life is participation in the encounter of Christ with the world."[1]

Bonhoeffer advanced the notion of the integrated person within the context of his discussion of the relationship between the individual and the collective person, i.e., the community. Integrated persons are in Bonhoeffer's view the constituent parts of the ethical community. Having clarified the notion of the integrated person, Bonhoeffer's views concerning the life of the individual as a social being, a member of society or ethical community must be examined. What are the rights and duties of the individual as a member of society, as social being? It is to these problems that the present investigation now turns.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 133.

CHAPTER VI

NATURAL RIGHTS

Introduction

Man has been created as a homo socialis. The individual and soiety depend upon each other. The individual person requires the presence of society for his self-realization; and society finds its embodiment in individual persons. Bonhoeffer in dealing with the notion of man as a social being and the problem of society as a multiplicity of persons writes in The Communion of Saints:

> To see the individual person as an ultimate unit, created by God's will, but as real only in sociality, is to see the relations of one with another, built upon difference, as also willed by God. This means that strife is the basic sociological law.[1]

How, in Bonhoeffer's view, can the individual person preserve his individuality in society? What are the basic rights which pertain to and thus safeguard the existence of each man qua man?

Bonhoeffer credits the French Revolution for ending man's century-old childlike dependence upon church and state by declaring the universal autonomy of man. The autonomy of man is based on rights which the French Revolution held to be inherent in man's nature. These natural rights are therefore inalienable: each man is free; each man is equal before the law; and all men are united as human beings in fraternity. From these natural and inviolable rights ensue the claims to human dignity, to man's self-realization, and to the acknowledgment of man's achievements. Autonomous man assumes full responsibility for shaping his own destiny. Natural rights, then, pertain to the essence of human existence, to life itself.

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 54.

The following observations of Bonhoeffer on life in general may aid in the understanding of his later comments on specific issues involving the concept of natural right. The Christ-centeredness of Bonhoeffer's thought is again noticeable in these observations.

Life, Bonhoeffer asserts, must be natural life. He writes: "The natural is form, immanent in life and serving it."[1] What does this phrase mean? Natural life, it may be recalled, is that form of life preserved by God after the Fall and directed towards the coming of Christ. Bonhoeffer points to two forms of life which are contrary to natural life and therefore unnatural. Whenever life is regarded as an absolute, either as an end in itself or as a means to an end, Bonhoeffer claims, it separates itself from natural life and destroys itself.

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[1] Ethics, p. 149.

Life as an end to itself is represented by vitalism. Vitalism is for Bonhoeffer a movement without end or purpose. Life, Bonhoeffer contends, must have a form in which it can live. Natural life is the form which God gave to life. This God-given form, Bonhoeffer says, "places life in the service of other life and of the world; in a limited sense it makes life a means to an end."[1]

Life as a means to an end is described by Bonhoeffer as "the mechanization of life."[2] The individual and the community are here regarded only from the perspective of their usefulness to serve a higher purpose. The reduction of the individual and the community to serve merely as a means to an end results in the destruction of life.

Natural life, however, is at once life as an end in itself and as a means to an end. On the one hand Bonhoeffer relates these two aspects of life to Jesus Christ; on the other hand he considers them within the framework of natural life.

In relation to Jesus Christ, life as an end in itself is to be regarded as creaturehood; life as a means to an end is the participation in the Kingdom of God.

Within the context of natural life, life as an end in itself is exemplified by the rights of life; while life as a means to an end manifests itself as the duties of life.

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 149. [2] *Ibid*., p. 150.

The rights and duties pertaining to man Bonhoeffer regards as the safeguards which ensure the preservation of life for the coming of Christ. He writes: "There is no right before God, but the natural, purely as what is given, becomes the right in relation to man."[1] Bonhoeffer places the rights of man before his duties, since natural life is given to man by God. Man's duties derive from his rights. Duties, Bonhoeffer asserts, are implicit in the rights. What, then, are the rights of man in natural life?

Natural Rights of Man

Bonhoeffer adopts from the Roman law the principle of *suum cuique* (to each his own) as the most comprehensive formulation of the natural rights of man. This principle expresses not only the multiplicity of the natural life and of the rights relating to it, but also the unity of the natural right. The multiplicity of the natural is exemplified by the inequality of men. Consequently the principle of *suum cuique* does not mean to each the same. If this were the case, Bonhoeffer argues, the multiplicity of natural life would be abandoned for an abstract law. Equally, the unity of natural rights would be abolished whenever the principle of suum cuique is arbitrarily and subjectively interpreted to serve the individual will. Bonhoeffer renders this explanation concerning the correct meaning of the multiplicity and unity of natural rights:

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 151.

> The 'his own' which belongs to each and every man is at the same time different and unequal in every case (though not indeed arbitrarily so); yet it is based upon what is naturally given and is therefore universal (but not abstractedly formal).[1]

The principle of suum cuique affirms the priority of natural or innate rights over all other rights. Based on the universality of natural rights, this principle also demands of each man that he respects the natural rights of other men.

The principle of suum cuique, Bonhoeffer states, presupposes that natural rights do not conflict with each other. If and when conflicts arise, they are due to man's failure to define precisely the concepts of rights. Here, Bonhoeffer believes, the principle of suum cuique, based solely on the autonomy of man as a rational being, has reached its limit. It failed to recognize that conflicts of rights are inherent in natural life. Strife existed already before the Fall. It is on this ground that strife must be considered a basic sociological law. But the natural as the world preserved after the Fall is the world of sin. Sin, man's failure to follow God's law, then, is the cause of the conflicts of rights. Therefore, man's fallibility requires that natural rights must be supplemented by positive rights, divine and secular.

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[1] Ibid., p. 152.

It is on account of the limitations of man's reason, Bonhoeffer maintains, that the principle of suum cuique for determining the rights of man in the world of sin belongs to natural life. Only in the ultimate shall each man receive his own through Jesus Christ.

Besides the first presupposition of the principle of suum cuique, i.e., the assumption that natural rights do not conflict with each other, Bonhoeffer mentions a second, namely, the presupposition that each individual has a natural right of his own. This claim is countered by a view which asserts that natural rights pertain only to the community and not to the individual per se. Bonhoeffer considers the elimination of individual rights for the sake of the welfare of the community to be a proclamation of social eudemonism and an attack upon natural life itself. Social eudemonism has often been the precursor of despotism, resulting in the complete abolition of all rights. The community derives the power to protect the individual and thereby its rights only from the rights of the multiplicity of individuals constituting the community. "The right of the individual," Bonhoeffer states," is the power which upholds the right of the community, just as, conversely, it is the community that upholds and defends the right of the individual."[1]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 153-54.

Against the priority of the community as claimed by social eudemonism, Bonhoeffer stresses the importance of the individual and his natural rights. He writes: "The existence of a natural right of the individual follows from the fact that it is God's will to create the individual and to endow him with eternal life."[1] God as the Creator of man, then, is the guarantor of his natural rights. Though the individual and the community are interdependent, the rights of the community are based upon the rights of the individual. Consequently Bonhoeffer argues that it is not social eudemonism, associated with what he calls "a blind voluntarism" which truly represents the reality of natural life; but it is the principle of suum cuique. He writes:

> The principle of suum cuique is the highest possible attainment of reason which is in accord with reality and which, within the natural life, discerns the right which is given to the individual by God (of whom reason knows nothing)[2]

The question arises: which are the specific rights given to man by God?

Man's Right to Self-preservation

"The preservation of the life of the body," Bonhoeffer declares,"is the foundation of all natural rights without exception and is, therefore, invested with a particular importance."[3] As early as The Communion of Saints

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[1] Ibid., p. 154. [2] Ibid., p. 154. [3] Ibid., p. 156.

Bonhoeffer dealt with this basic problem of man's existence.

It may be recalled, that in Bonhoeffer's view, human history begins with the coming of sin, that is, after the Fall. Man living in the reality of the fallen world has a right to live; but man's will to self-preservation as such is not evil. "Sin," Bonhoeffer wrote then, "is the will to affirm in principle oneself and not the other as a value, and to acknowledge the other only in relation to oneself."[1]

In the previous chapter a brief reference has been made to Bonhoeffer's lecture: "The Right to Self-assertion." Bonhoeffer advanced from the perspective of Jesus Christ some general observations and claimed that man's right to live can only be derived from man's responsibility for others and his freedom to self-sacrifice.

What are Bonhoeffer's more specific views concerning man's right to live from the perspective of the natural rights of the individual?

As has been pointed out above, the foundation of all natural rights is the preservation of life. Bodily life, Bonhoeffer contends, is not only a means to an end, it is also an end in itself. The notion of the body as an end in itself may be interpreted from two points of view. First, the body is an end in itself according to the doctrine of resurrection. "Man," Bonhoeffer states, "is a bodily being and remains so in eternity as well."[1] Second, the body is an end in itself in natural life. In support of this claim Bonhoeffer says: " It is in the joys of the body that it becomes apparent that the body is an end in itself in natural life."[2] These joys pertain to the homes of men, to eating, drinking, clothing, recreation, play, and sex. "The life of the body," Bonhoeffer thinks, "aasumes its full significance only with the fulfiment of its inherent claim to joy."[3]

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 82.

Man 's natural right to the preservation of his life implies the inviolability of life in general and thus the inviolability of man's body. Man's body as the form of his existence in natural life belongs exclusively to man himself. It is through his body, occupying space, that man is recognized by other men as an individual entity. Generally speaking, Bonhoeffer believes that man's bodily life should not be violated. He writes: "Any hurt done to my body is an injury to my personal existence."[4]

Nevertheless there are some exceptions which justify the suspension of this general rule. Bonhoeffer addresses himself to a number of problems which involve the inviolability of man's body. These are: corporal punishment, arbitrary killing, euthanasia, suicide, abortion and birth control, and sterilization. Bonhoeffer's views concerning these problems will now be stated briefly. Some of the problems will be discussed later in detail within a wider context.

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[1] *Ethics*, p. 156. [2] *Ibid*., p. 156. [3] *Ibid*., p. 158.
[4] *Ibid*., p. 159.

Corporal Punishment

The person's awareness of possessing an independent existence is in Bonhoeffer's opinion the criterion for determining the application of corporal punishment. Bonhoeffer thinks for instance that it is right to chastize a child since the child has not attained an independent existence. Corporal punishment is a means to bring home to the child this lack of independence and thereby to foster the child's development to become an independent person. Bonhoeffer does admit that it is difficult to determine when the limit of childhood has been reached. To subject an adult who is conscious of his independent existence to corporal punishment Bonhoeffer considers to be wrong in general. However, Bonhoeffer does not object in principle to the infliction of corporal punishment on criminals. He maintains that there may be good reasons for it in certain cases. But Bonhoeffer strongly stresses the inviolability of the body of free and independent persons. A conscious injury to the body of another means the destruction of his first natural right, the right to self-preservation.

Arbitrary Killing

Bonhoeffer writes at length about the problem of arbitrary killing or murder in its various forms from the perspective of natural rights. This is not surprising, since the essays--some unfinished--which comprise his Ethics were composed at a time when National Socialism was at the peak of its power. These essays are in general an affirmation of the Christian life and of the supreme value of the individual person against the claim of the superiority of the Volk as stated in the Blut und Boden-theory of national socialist racism.

It is understandable that Bonhoeffer, confronted by the arbitrary destruction of life for the sake of the Volk, takes issue with the utter contempt displayed by National Socialism for the natural right of the individual. Though written with his contemporary situation in mind, Bonhoeffer's remarks concerning arbitrary killing must be understood from the perspective of natural rights in general.

"All deliberate killing of innocent life is arbitrary,"[1] Bonhoeffer states categorically. (Bonhoeffer's expressions: bewusste or vorsätzliche have been translated as 'deliberate', willkürlich as 'arbitrary'). Immediately two questions arise: First, are there exceptions, and if so, why? Second, what constitutes "innocent life"? The problems Bonhoeffer touches upon are extremely complicated and involve basic tenets of juris prudence and of the philosophy of right. The present task is to render as clearly as possible Bonhoeffer's own views without any comments.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

In Bonhoeffer's opinion two cases illustrate that deliberate killing is not always arbitrary. War, Bonhoeffer believes, justifies the killing of the enemy and the unintentional killing of civilians in the course of a military action. Furthermore, the execution of a criminal is also an exception. It is, he feels, a clear case of murder to kill defenseless prisoners of war and wounded soldiers; this also applies to the killing of innocent persons in general. With regard to the second question the following explanation is given by Bonhoeffer: "Any life is innocent which does not engage in a conscious attack upon the life of another and which cannot be convicted of any criminal deed that is worthy of death."[1]

This explanation clearly reveals that Bonhoeffer's term "innocent life" is not to be understood in a moral but in a legal sense. Innocent life refers to a person who is 'not guilty' of any action which, in Bonhoeffer's words, would be worthy of death. It seems to be correct to assume that Bonhoeffer regards as worthy of death any deliberate killing of a person. Consequently Bonhoeffer argues that it is the first right of the individual person to protect himself against any arbitrary killing.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

Obviously the safety of the life of the individual cannot be guaranteed completely, either by his own efforts or by the protection of laws of society. A society which adheres strictly to the natural rights of the individual does secure the existence of its members to a much higher degree than is the case in a totalitarian society which ignores the natural rights of man. The problem of euthanasia exemplifies dramatically the helplessness of the individual vis-à-vis the power of the totalitarian state.

Euthanasia

Bonhoeffer examines carefully all aspects of the problem of euthanasia which centers upon the question: what life is worth living and what life is not worth living? Considering the reasoning that leads to a decision pro or con euthanasia Bonhoeffer maintains that not a host of different factors but only one single factor must be established as valid for the unconditional necessity and therefore rightfulness of euthanasia. Bonhoeffer then takes issue with two points of view in relation to mercy-killing; the one is represented by the consideration for the sick, the other by the consideration for the healthy.

Can an incurably sick but sane person demand the termination of his life? After a thorough discussion of all the ramifications of this problem and special attention to mentally-defective persons, Bonhoeffer concludes: "Consideration for the patient cannot be regarded as adequate ground for the necessity of destroying human life."[1] As a matter of principle, Bonhoeffer insists, the right to life prevails over the right to kill.

Can the interests of the healthy justify the destruction of innocent life? This question is based on the assumption that the life of the individual is of value only as long as it is useful for the community.

Bonhoeffer rejects this assumption as absolutely false and untenable in view of the consequences in practical life. The value of the life of the individual does not depend on its usefulness for society. Bonhoeffer even insists that life as such is not a question of value at all. "The right to live," Bonhoeffer says, "is a matter of essence and not of any values. In the sight of God there is no life that is not worth living; for life itself is valued by God."[2] The criterion for determining the value of a life cannot be the individual will to live. Nor can it be the judgment of society, since this would end with the destruction of life itself. The criterion for the ultimate value of a life is only God. Consequently Bonhoeffer argues that to destroy the sufferers of incurable diseases for the sake of health as the supreme value is arbitrary killing. Euthanasia, then, is completely rejected by Bonhoeffer.

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[1] Ibid.,p. 162. [2] Ibid., p. 163.

Euthanasia can be described as the destruction of individual life in the name of and by society. What does Bonhoeffer have to say about the destruction of individual life by the individual himself, in other words, suicide?

Suicide

Man is free to live and to die. It may be remembered that Bonhoeffer considers man's right to life and thus the preservation of life as the foundation of all natural rights. But Bonhoeffer also points out that from a Christian point of view man's right to live is based on man's preparedness for self-sacrifice.

Addressing himself to the problem of suicide in general, Bonhoeffer reiterates his view that the right to live rests on the freedom to self-sacrifice. Man must, Bonhoeffer writes, "regard the life of his body as a gift that is to be preserved and as a sacrifice that is to be offered."[1] The meaning of sacrifice is not the destruction of one's own life, but the attainment of a good through the sacrifice of life. The difficulty surrounding the problem of suicide lies in distinguishing between suicide and self-sacrifice.

Man's freedom to live or to die makes him the master over his earthly destiny. If life has become utterly meaningless and unbearable, suicide is man's final gesture of self-affirmation and self-justification in rejection of life as blind fate. "Suicide," Bonhoeffer asserts,"is a man's attempt to give a final human meaning to a life which has become humanly meaningless."[1] Here the affirmation of life consists in the negation of life.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 166.

Suicide cannot be declared wrong by morality or by men, but only in the sight of God, the Creator of life. Suicide is wrong, Bonhoeffer states, because it is the sin of unbelief in a living God and in divine judgment and justification. Natural life has its rights only in God, not in itself. God alone decides over life and death. Consequently Bonhoeffer declares: "There is no other cogent reason for the wrongfulness of suicide, but only the fact that over men there is a God. Suicide implies denial of this fact."[2]

The difficulty of distinguishing between the freedom to self-sacrifice and the abuse of this freedom of terminating one's own life is greatly increased when particular cases are to be considered. Bonhoeffer even contends that there is no basis for judgment with regard to a specific action because the limit of human knowledge has been reached. Man cannot judge with certainty the motives of another man which caused him to end his life. Therefore the absolute prohibition of suicide cannot be maintained vis-à-vis the freedom to self-sacrifice. To judge suicide from a purely moral point of view is impossible. "The right to suicide," Bonhoeffer believes,"is nullified only by the living God."[1] The temptation to suicide can be overcome only by the knowledge of God's grace and forgiveness. "But who would venture to say," Bonhoeffer asks, "that God's grace and mercy cannot embrace and sustain even a man's failure to resist this hardest of all temptations?"[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 167. [2] Ibid., p. 168.

Arbitrary killing consists not only in the deliberate killing of another man and in man's self-destruction as suicide or sacrifice; it includes also the destruction of unborn life. The question to be answered is: what is Bonhoeffer's view with regard to abortion from the perspective of natural right?

Abortion

The right to self-preservation includes the right to propagation. The question is, can and must the right to the preservation of life be extended to unborn life? Bonhoeffer answers this question with an emphatic: Yes! The union of two human beings in marriage, Bonhoeffer reasons, includes as a matter of principle the acknowledgement of the right to life of the children to be born out of this union. Since God is the Creator of all life and causes new life to come into being from this marriage, the unborn's natural right to life is inviolable. "Destruction of the embryo in the mother's womb," Bonhoeffer writes, "is a violation of the right to live which God has bestowed upon this nascent life."[1] It is irrelevant to ask whether or not the embryo is a human being. For Bonhoeffer the embryo represents God's intent to create a human being. Consequently the destruction of the embryo is the denial of his natural right to live; it is arbitrary killing.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 172. [2] *Ibid.*, p, 172.

Bonhoeffer follows up the presentation of the various aspects of arbitrary killing with a discussion of the problem of birth control and sterilization from the perspective of natural right.

Birth Control

Concerning birth control Bonhoeffer distinguishes between the consistent refusal to beget children and the limiting of the number of children to be born. The determination of a couple not to have children is in Bonhoeffer's view not only contrary to the meaning of marriage, it violates the right of life to be born. In contrast, the responsible control of births finds Bonhoeffer's full approval. The desire for a child should not depend upon the satisfaction of a blind biological drive, Bonhoeffer thinks, but must take into consideration the counseling of reason and responsibility.

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[1] Ibid., p. 175.

Birth control is a kind of natural reaction against the rapid growth of the population fostered by man's ever-increasing mastery over nature. Inquiring into the rightfulness of birth control, Bonhoeffer points out that marriage includes the right to reproduction as well as the right to bodily union based on the mutual love of the couple. This right is in Bonhoeffer's view a human right which must be exercised with reason. The rightfulness of responsible birth control, then, must be determined by the conscience of the marriage partners.

Sterilization

Sterilization is the most radical form of birth control. Sterilization, either voluntary or enforced by the state (as it has been in Nazi Germany), is a problem only in relation to disease, since the human body is inherently inviolable. The purpose of sterilization is the elimination of dangerous consequences while maintaining certain bodily functions. Sterilization is in Bonhoeffer's opinion an infringement of the natural right of reproduction. The state bases its right to enforced sterilization upon the necessity to protect the general health of the people. This constitutes a severe limitation of man's right to the inviolability of his body. "There is an overwhelming danger," Bonhoeffer remarks,"that once this boundary has been crossed . . . all other barriers will soon be broken down as well."[1]

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 182.

Besides the specific instance of state-enforced sterilization what other actions must be generally regarded as violations of man's right to bodily life?

Freedom of Bodily Life

The preservation of life as the foundation of all natural rights includes man's right to protect himself against any arbitrary infringement of the freedom of his body since the body represents man himself. The liberty of the body is violated whenever the body of one person is subjected to and abused by the unrestricted power of another. "Rape, exploitation, torture and arbitrary confinement of the human body," Bonhoeffer declares, "are serious violations of the right which is given with the creation of man."[1]

Bonhoeffer thinks that not only rape but also the coercion of two people into marriage constitutes a violation of the freedom of the body; especially the destruction of the sense of shame. "In the natural feeling of shame," Bonhoeffer notes, "expression is given to the essential freedom of the human body in its sexual aspect."[2]

Exploitation exists whenever a human body is used as a means to an end; whether it is by a private person or by a state using the force of law. The exploitation of man's bodily strength is a violation of the liberty of his body.

Physical torture not only violates the body, it also dishonors the human being. The result is hatred together with the wish to restore the wounded honor. Physical torture and the desire for revenge lead to the destruction of society.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 183. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

Arbitrary confinement of an innocent person is not only the deprivation of all his bodily rights, it is also the deprivation of his honor bound up with his personal freedom. Arbitrary confinement, Bonhoeffer asserts, undermines the whole order of society and ensues necessarily the restoration of the rights of natural life.

Summary

The existence of the individual person as a social being is protected by his natural rights. The Roman law principle of suum cuique expresses most comprehensively the multiplicity of natural life and the rights pertaining to it and also the unity of natural rights. But the principle of suum cuique, which Bonhoeffer declares to be the highest possible attainment of man's reason, fails to recognize that conflicts are inherent in the natural. The fallen world is the world of sin. Sin, therefore, is the cause of the conflicts of natural rights.

Natural right (Naturrecht) derives from God, the Creator of man and thus the guarantor of his natural rights. The foundation of all natural rights is the preservation of life. The preservation of man's body, the form of his existence in natural life, is justified not only according to the doctrine of resurrection, but also by its inherent claim to joy in natural life. Consequently any violation of man's bodily life is an injury to his personal existence.

Bonhoeffer considers a number of problems involving the violation of man's natural right to bodily life. Corporal punishment may be inflicted on a child and a criminal. The arbitrary killing of a person is always wrong except in the case of war and the execution of a criminal. Euthanasia is in principle rejected by Bonhoeffer as arbitrary killing of individual life in the name of and by society. Since man is free to live or die, the question whether a man's self-destruction is suicide or sacrifice cannot be judged with certainty by men. Suicide is wrong only in the sight of God as the denial of God's existence. In Bonhoeffer's view the destruction of nascent life is always arbitrary killing. However, the responsible control of births, Bonhoeffer believes, is justified and must be determined by the conscience of the marriage partners. Sterilization constitutes always a severe infringement of the natural right to reproduction; it can only be defended as a prevention of disease. But state-enforced sterilization, Bonhoeffer warns, leads easily to additional limitations of the individual's right to bodily life. Other instances of arbitrary violations of man's freedom of the body include rape, exploitation, torture and arbitrary confinement. Here not only the body is violated but also a person's honor associated with his body. Consequently the natural right to preserve life includes man's right to protect the freedom of his body against any arbitrary infringements. The right to life, then, is the foundation of all natural rights which safeguard the existence of the individual as a social being.

From a discussion of the individual as a social being the present investigation now attempts to state Bonhoeffer's views concerning the relationship of the individual to the institutions of society in general.

CHAPTER VII

DUTIES

Introduction

"For the sake of Christ," Bonhoeffer writes, "natural life must be lived within the framework of certain definite rights and certain definite duties."[1] In the previous chapter it has been shown that natural rights safeguard the existence of the individual as a social being only when they are universally acknowledged and respected. To acknowledge and respect the natural rights of others is the duty of man as a social being. Consequently social life is possible only when it is based upon man's natural rights and also upon his duties.

What are the duties which in Bonhoeffer's opinion pertain to man's existence as an individual and as a member of society and thus determine in general his place and function in society?

In his Ethics Bonhoeffer scrutinizes from a christological basis the relationship between the individual person and the collective person in its ethical as well as in its socio-philosophical aspects. While secular ethics in general is concerned with the problem of good and evil in order to determine the ultimate standard of right conduct, Bonhoeffer's Ethics centers upon his quest for the presence of Christ in the world and its consequences for the Christian's life in society.

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[1] Ethics, p. 150.

Stressing the distinction between secular and Christian ethics, Bonhoeffer writes: "Knowledge of Jesus Christ implies ignorance of a man's own good and evil; knowledge of Jesus Christ refers the man entirely to Jesus Christ."[1] Consequently Bonhoeffer maintains that the life of the Christian in the world is not determined by his knowledge of good and evil, but by his unity with God, a unity which was given back to man by Jesus Christ. "Christian life," Bonhoeffer declares, "is participation in the encounter of Christ with the world."[2]

How does Bonhoeffer relate the christocentric interpretation of man's life in general to man's duties in the world?

In its broadest meaning, the concept of duty in secular ethics refers to what a man is required or obligated to do. Duty as a moral obligation is on the one hand the duty a man has to himself and on the other hand the duty he has towards others and society. Duty, then, refers not only to the *de facto* values guiding man's conduct in life; duty, in the form of moral laws or principles, refers also to normative values for judging *de facto* values. The decisive problem of ethics is, how do men attain their normative values?

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[1] Ibid., p. 39. [2] Ibid., p. 133.

To elucidate Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Christian concept of duty and to distinguish it from the ethical concept of duty, a few general remarks concerning normative values in ethical theory might be helpful.

In the history of western ethics various normative values have been claimed to be the *summum bonum*, the supreme good or the ultimate end of human conduct. Virtue, the good, self-realization, perfection, happiness, pleasure, power, peace, and obedience to the voice of duty, to conscience have been regarded as criteria for judging human conduct.

The origin or source of man's knowledge of the highest good or of right and wrong has been found basically in three ways: empirically, from the actual experience of man; a priori, as a construct of man's reason, independent of actual experience; and by intuition, that is, man's immediate apprehension of moral value as such. The highest good is either autonomous or heteronomous, i.e., it is based either on its own or on an outside authority. The outside authority of moral laws or normative values is either that of God or the Church, the state, or society. These authorities usually exert a combined pressure upon the individual to conform to their moral dictates. The individual experiences this constraint as a sense of duty. Religious, political, and social sanctions thus motivate man to guide his conduct according to the normative values of the society in which he lives.

In contrast to ethical theories in which moral conduct is motivated by the attainment of a desired end, that ethical theory which regards duty as the summum bonum is not concerned with the results of man's conduct but with its origin. The most famous proponent of the theory of duty for duty's sake was Kant, who believed that not motives but respect for the moral law should prompt man's actions.

Kant expressed the supreme law of duty in the categorical imperative. This absolute moral law of rational , self-determining beings requires the moral agent to obey only that law which can be willed universally without contradiction and regardless of consequences.

Bonhoeffer, however, rejects the Kantian notion of duty, based on the autonomy of man and his good intention, as the sole principle of all moral law. In contrast to Kant, Bonhoeffer ascribes priority to man's rights and not to man's duties. Bonhoeffer argues that since God first gives life with its ensuing rights to man before he makes demands of man, it follows that duties derive from rights.

Christian Ethics

In the tradition of the classical argument between faith and reason, Bonhoeffer elaborates the distinction between theological and philosophical ethics. To illustrate the insufficiency of an ethics based on the autonomy of man as a rational and self-determining being Bonhoeffer points to the principle of *suum cuique*. He contends that this principle, derived from man's reason as a jural form of morality, cannot determine absolutely the natural rights of man and thus achieve equal justice for all. According to theological ethics, man's reason fails to take into account the fact of sin. The significance of individual and universal sin, in the thought of Bonhoeffer, has been stated on several occasions and it has been discussed in some detail in the chapter entitled "The Individual and Society." Within the present context the following brief remarks may suffice.

Sin as man's turning away from God by his own volition reveals to man his imperfection and his guilt, Man becomes aware of his incapacity to obey and fulfill the law of God, and also of his condemnation by God which his disobedience entails. Only through faith which man receives through God's grace does he attain a goodness of which he is naturally incapable. Only faith assures the sinner that God has redeemed him through Jesus Christ. The knowledge of God, the *summum bonum* for Thomas Aquinas, is for Bonhoeffer the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This knowledge, theological ethics claims, is beyond man's reason, it is revealed to man through God's grace. Sin is the destruction of man's communion with God which cannot be restored by reason but only by faith.

Consequently Bonhoeffer attributes to sin the conflicts of rights in natural life. The universality of sin, then, implies that in natural life conflicts arise with regard to rights as well as to duties. From a Christian perspective, man's claim to moral autonomy cannot be maintained. Not reason, but God's law is the Christian's absolute and supreme guide in natural life.

It may be recalled that Bonhoeffer considers the natural life given to man by God as life which is placed in the service of other life and of the world. Responsibility, therefore, is the central idea which characterizes Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Christian life. Man living in natural life, the penultimate, is freed for total responsibility only by a total response to the Word of God. Bonhoeffer emphasizes the aspect of totality and writes:

> This concept of responsibility is intended as referring to the concentrated totality and unity of the response to the reality which is given to us in Jesus Christ, as distinct from the partial responses which might arise, for example, from a consideration of utility of from particular principles.[1]

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[1] *Ethics*, p. 222.

Life that is in correspondence with reality, i.e., life in correspondence with Jesus Christ, is responsible life. In other words, God revealed to man the normative values or principles for guiding his decisions and actions in the world.through Jesus Christ who alone fulfilled the law and lived in deputyship for all mankind.

To repeat a thought of Bonhoeffer already stated earlier in discussing natural life, life as an end in itself finds expression in the rights of man, while life as a means to an end refers to man's duties. Generally speaking, the notion of responsible life implies not only man's God-given or innate rights and thus man's obligation to God and to himself; it also implies man's duties, his obligation to other men, to the domain of things, and to society and its institutions. More specifically, to Bonhoeffer, responsible life means first and foremost man's obedience to the call of Jesus Christ. It is this special Christian (New Testament) connotation which Bonhoeffer applies to the concept of vocation or calling[1] to describe man's duty or the place of his responsibility in the world.

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[1] In the following presentation, vocation or calling refers to the specific Christian meaning, while vocation or calling refers to the ordinary or secular meaning of the concepts, not underlined.

The Supreme Duty of the Christian

"Vocation," Bonhoeffer asserts, "is responsibility and responsibility is a total response to the whole of reality."[1] Since the second part of Bonhoeffer's definition of vocation has already been explained above in his own words, our attention is directed towards the first part. What does Bonhoeffer mean by equating vocation with responsibility?

Whenever in everyday life one speaks of man's responsibility, one associates the concept of responsibility primarily with the loyal execution of those duties which man's work imposes upon him. Consequently the term vocation and the term calling ordinarily have a rather restricted meaning; they refer to that institution of society which Bonhoeffer designates as the mandate of labor. But besides his vocational duties man must fulfill various functions in other institutions of society which order and regulate his life. Man, therefore, is faced by a multiplicity of duties which, together with his natural rights, determine his place and function in society.

Bonhoeffer clearly indicates, however, that he does not attribute to the concept of vocation its usual restricted secular or ethical meaning. Moreover, Bonhoeffer refutes what he calls the "pseudo-Lutheran view" of vocation by which all earthly institutions are justified and sanctified. *Vocation* or *calling* Bonhoeffer explains as follows:

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[1] Ethics, p. 258.

> The calling in the New Testament sense is never a sanctioning of worldly institutions as such; its 'yes' to them always includes at the same time an extremely emphatic 'no', an extremely sharp protest against the world.[1]

For Bonhoeffer the term *vocation* signifies more than man's worldly obligations; it refers to man's encounter with Jesus Christ. "In the encounter with Jesus Christ," Bonhoeffer says,"man hears the call (*Ruf*) of God and in it the calling (*Berufung*) to life in the fellowship of Jesus Christ."[2] The call of God is the call of grace which through Jesus Christ reaches man irrespective of his station[3] in life. God's grace lays claim to the life of man so that he can live justified before God. Man lives in the world, but he belongs to God.

The specific meaning of the term *vocation* or *calling*, then, refers to man's answering the call of God at whatever man's station in the world may be. Bonhoeffer comments:

> The value of the secular calling for the Christian is that it provides an opportunity of living the Christian life with the support of God's grace, and of engaging more vigorously in the assault on the world and everything that ist stands for.[4]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 255. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

[3] The terms station, office, or objective position in the world refer to the various functions man as a member of society performs in its orders or institutions.

[4] *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 298.

The world preserved by God for the second coming of Christ is still the fallen world, the world of sin. It is at his station in the world that the Christian engages in the battle against evil by heeding the call of Christ. Through Jesus Christ, the mediator, the call of God gives man absolute freedom; freedom for God and freedom from the world. Thus man's vocation (Berufung) is to oppose the world by fulfilling his duties in the world. The supreme duty of the Christian, therefore, is his responsibility to the call of Jesus Christ.

How can man as a member of society lead a responsible life? In other words, what is the relationship between man's duties in the world and his responsibility to the call of Jesus Christ?

A general account of Bonhoeffer's notion of the responsible life in its specifically Christian aspects, i.e., responsible life looked upon from a theological vantage point, has already been presented in the chapter entitled: "The Individual as Integrated Person." The problem now is to determine Bonhoeffer's view concerning the practical application of the concept of vocation to the realities of everyday life.

Responsible Life

The Lordship of Christ is the central theme of Bonhoeffer's *Ethics*. In Jesus Christ the reality of God is united with the reality of the world. The Christian, therefore, does not live in a world divided into a divine sphere and a secular sphere. Rather, he lives in one world which belongs completely to Christ as the center of all reality. To live responsibly in this world is the *vocation* of the Christian.

The totality of the claim of Jesus Christ demands man's total response. Bonhoeffer thinks that man's retreat from the world is not a genuine response to the call of Christ. Consequently he rejects monasticism as an escape from the world. He asserts: "There is no real possibility of being a Christian outside the reality of the world . . . and there is no real worldly existence outside the reality of Jesus Christ."[1]

Bonhoeffer adopts Luther's view of man's calling in the world, which expresses the unity of the reality of the world and the reality of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus Christ lived and died in responsibility to God for all mankind, Luther attributed a specific significance to the limited responsibility which pertains to man's calling in the world.

Luther combined this limited responsibility with man's unlimited responsibility to the call of Jesus Christ.

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[1] *Ethics*, p. 200.

Consequently Luther held that a calling is justified and sanctified only when it enables man to live responsibly in the world. It is the loyal discharge of his duties in responsibility to the call of Jesus Christ which gives man a free and joyous conscience. Man's fellowship with Christ frees his conscience from the conflict of duties encountered in the world. In contrast to the freedom of action of the liberated conscience of the Christian, the natural conscience of autonomous man can only mediate the conflict of duties. Autonomous man can only overcome this compromise of duties and the ensuing insecurity of his conscience by answering the call of Christ at his station in the world.

The relation to Christ frees man for responsible action in the world beyond the limits of his specific station or calling. By answering the call of Christ, man recognizes that his particular place and function in society entails responsibility for the whole of society. Man's _vocation_, based on his unlimited responsibility to the call of Jesus Christ, includes his vocation in the sense of his station or position in the world with its limited responsibilities.

The relationship between man's _vocation_ (_Berufung_) and his vocation (_Beruf_) and thus between unlimited and limited responsibility might be clarified by means of an analogy. Two concentric circles, one large and one small, represent the whole of reality and man's specific station in the world, respectively. The center of both circles is occupied by Jesus Christ, the center of all reality as well as the center of man's existence. Man's vocation and his limited responsibility is restricted to the smaller circle, but man's vocation is his total response to the call of Christ, the larger circle, the whole of reality. Vocation, therefore, is total or unlimited responsibility.

Bonhoeffer consequently argues that it is impossible to define by law the exact limits of man's responsibility with regard to his vocational duties. Man as a freely responsible individual must decide for himself whether or not to remain within the realm of his workaday duties. The only valid criterion for this decision, Bonhoeffer contends, is man's responsibility to the call of Jesus Christ. Obedience to the call of Jesus Christ alone renders man free for responsible action.

The concept of vocation in its New Testament connotation also includes man's duty to obey God's commandment to love his neighbor. Love is the central notion of Christian ethics. Only by loving God and mankind can the Christian fulfill the law. Love alone gives moral value to the Christian concept of duty.

Concerning God's commandment to love one's neighbor, Bonhoeffer writes: "Neighbourliness is not a quality in other people, it is simply their claim on ourselves. Every moment and every situation challenges us to action and to obedience."[1]

To illustrate a common misunderstanding of this commandment of God Bonhoeffer refers to Nietzsche's notion of Fernstenliebe. The love for one's neighbor does not mean a "legalistic" restriction of man's responsibility to those who are known and near to him. It demands more of man, for it includes the one who is furthest from him. Bonhoeffer writes:

> If beyond his neighbour a man does not know this one who is furthest from him, and if he does not know this one who is furthest from him as this neighbour, then he does not serve his neighbour but himself; he takes refuge from the free open space of responsibility in the comforting confinement of the fulfilment of duty.[2]

The supreme duty of the Christian to answer the call of Christ and to live responsibly in the world includes, surpasses, and thereby determines all other duties of man. Only in this way can the evangelical freedom of the concept of man's vocation be maintained. What does Bonhoeffer mean by "evangelical freedom?"

Bonhoeffer elucidates the phrase "evangelical freedom" by referring to the problem of God's law and man's liberty. The Decalogue and the divine mandates are God's means of ordering the world. Man's freedom for responsible action does, under certain circumstances, require the breaking of the law of God. "It is precisely responsible action," Bonhoeffer insists, " which will not separate this law from its Giver."[1] In other words, the law should not be regarded as an independent entity in and for itself and thus as removed from God, it must be acknowledged as God's law. God is more than the law. In Jesus Christ God revealed Himself as the Redeemer of the world. Man's responsibility to Jesus Christ frees him, for responsible action, from the law. "The suspension of the law," Bonhoeffer maintains, "can only serve the true fulfilment of it."[2] Only when man recognizes the seriousness of breaking God's law and only when he accepts the guilt incurred by the violation of the law does his freedom to break the law truly hallow the law.

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[1] The Cost of Discipleship, p. 86. [2] Ethics, p. 259.

The presentation of Bonhoeffer's understanding of man's vocation is best concluded and summarized by restating his own definition of the concept of vocation: "Vocation is responsibility and responsibility is a total response to the whole of reality."[3] However, this specifically Christian definition of duty constitutes only a partial answer to the earlier question which referred to the practical application of the concept of vocation to the realities of everyday life. Consequently this inquiry requires that the Christian notion of duty must be contrasted by an exposition of Bonhoeffer's view of the ethical concept of duty. The comparison of the Christian concept of duty with the ethical concept of duty not only provides an answer to the abovementioned question, it also clarifies the problem of duty as it pertains to the individual in society.

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[1] Ibid., p. 261. [2] Ibid., p. 261. [3] Ibid., p. 258.

The Ethical Concept of Duty

In Bonhoeffer's opinion the problem of ethics is the problem of life. Man must decide the question of good in the midst of his historical existence. In a lecture, "Grundfragen einer christlichen Ethik", given as early as 1929, Bonhoeffer said:

> Ethics is a matter of history; it is not simply something which has descended from heaven to earth, but is rather a child of the earth. For this reason it changes its appearance with the trends of history and the shifts of generations.[1]

However, Bonhoeffer warns against a total moralization of life. Life is not at every moment a problem of moral deliberation and decision. The "ethical phenomenon", to use Bonhoeffer's terminology, must be confined to its proper time and place in the life of men. When is the proper time and where is the proper place for the ethical phenomenon to assert itself?

The ordering of life in accordance with a supreme moral principle, with its deliberation of what is good and evil, and the resulting experience of duty in man's actions according to accepted norms and values is what Bonhoeffer calls a Grenzereignis, an event at the border or periphery of man's existence.

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[1] No Rusty Swords, p. 40.

The ethical phenomenon as man's experience of the "ought" (Sollen) is restricted to those situations in the life of men in which moral actions and moral principles have become questionable. The "ought" is to be heeded or re-examined whenever men's relationships with other men, things, and the institutions of society are deficient or endangered, or when society itself is threatened by disintegration. As soon as the order of life is restored the "ought" retreats into the background of human existence.

The "ought" in its permanent form as man's awareness of his own limitation and in its acute form as initiator of moral deliberation and corrective action, Bonhoeffer insists, must remain an ultimate word. The "ought", reducing the complexities of life into universal principles, should not be converted into a pedagogical method. The "ought" must be regarded as the exceptional, the extraordinary, which thereby affirms ordinary life. Consequently Bonhoeffer thinks that the questioning of life's values must be followed by a time in which the course of moral action is self-evident for the individual as well as for society.

For Bonhoeffer the essential task of an ethics is not the continuous interference in life or the representation of goodness as an end in itself, but to help people to learn to share in life within the bounds of the "ought". Bonhoeffer's notion of sharing in life does not mean that man should live out of the motive of the "ought" but "from the full abundance of vital motives, from the natural and the organic, and from free acceptance and will."[1]

From a general discussion of the purpose of an ethics in society, Bonhoeffer turns to a consideration of the place and function of the ethical phenomenon in relation to man as a member of society. Bonhoeffer's concern is with what he calls "the warrant for ethical discourse." He tries to determine to whom moral authority belongs, who is to decide what is right and wrong, what thus ought to be, and what is, therefore, man's duty.

The "ought" implies a situation in life in which something is not what it should be or what it is desired to be. The "ought" is a moral command and therefore implies authority and obedience, the relation of the superior and the inferior. "Superiority does not consist in the subjective value of the superior man," Bonhoeffer explains, "but it derives its legitimation from a concrete objective commission."[2]

The ethical, Bonhoeffer believes, reflects the structure of human society in which each man occupies a certain place in the hierarchy of social order, determined and clearly defined by the relationship between superiority and inferiority. Bonhoeffer comments:

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[1] Ethics, p.269. [2] Ibid., p. 274.

> The ethical . . . implies certain definite sociological relations which involve authority. It is only within these relationships that it makes its appearance and acquires the concrete warrant or authorization which is essential for it.[1]

Man cannot confer upon himself the authority of the moral command, the "ought", Bonhoeffer points out. Only on the basis of his station in life is the "warrant for ethical discourse" imparted to man. Man's station in life determines his responsibility.

In a radio broadcast in February of 1933, Bonhoeffer expressed his ideas concerning the relationship between man and his office and its ensuing authority and responsibility. At that time he said: "A feature of man's maturity is his responsibility towards other people, towards existing orders. He must let himself be controlled, ordered, restricted."[2] Bonhoeffer's remarks obviously referred to the situation in Germany in the early thirties in which the ruthlessness in the struggle for political power resulted not only in serious upheavals in society in general, but also undermined the respect and trust of the people in their government.

The rights pertaining to man's office invest him with the authority to command and thus to demand obedience from subordinates. The duties of his station require him to execute his tasks faithfully. Consequently, the responsibility relating to man's specific position in the world also includes his responsibility to his subordinates, to himself, to the inherent dignity of his office, and to society. Only the responsibility invested in man's station in life bestows on man the authority of the moral command, thereby displaying the disparity between the superior and the inferior in the structure of human society.

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 272. [2] _No Rusty Swords_, p. 202.

Bonhoeffer is firmly convinced that the ethical, to be meaningful at all in the relationships of man with other men and the institutions of society, must be based on a clearly established order in society. He writes:

> Without this subjective subordination of the lower to the higher, and without that courage to accept superiority which modern man has so completely lost, ethical discourse is dissipated in generalities, it lacks an object and its essential character is destroyed.[1]

The ethical must reflect the concrete relations which exist at a given time and place in a society. "Society," Bonhoeffer states, " consists solely in the concrete and infinitely manifold relationships of responsible men for one another."[2] Whenever an ethics is separated from the concrete realities of man's existence and interpreted as a universally valid rational principle, the result is subjectivism and individualism.

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[1] Ethics, p. 272. [2] Ibid., p. 273.

Man's duty as a member of society is seen from the ethical point of view as dependent upon and determined by man's station in life. The question arises, why should man's station in life or his objective position in the world be endowed with moral authority at all? How can the claim to moral authority be justified?

Bonhoeffer points to two explanations of the source of moral authority as possible answers. In one view, which he describes as empirical positivism, reality itself is considered to be the basis of moral authority. In the second view, which in Bonhoeffer's opinion is nothing but a metaphysical or religious positivism, moral authority is distributed as divine appointments within a system of orders and values.

Bonhoeffer rejects both answers as insufficient and unsatisfactory. In both cases no clear and distinct lines of demarcation among the different orders of society have been established so that the claim for moral authority results in a struggle for supremacy. Concerning the first view Bonhoeffer remarks that moral authority must be independent of the reality of a given time. Man's existence in history is subject to change; it follows that with the change in man's historical situation the basis for moral authority also changes. The instability of the first view is contrasted by the rigidity of the second which, in

Bonhoeffer's judgment, does not take into consideration the fullness of life. "Systematic construction and metaphysical deduction alike," Bonhoeffer critically observes, "lead to inertness in real life."[1]

Bonhoeffer contends that the basis for moral authority cannot be found in a locally or temporally restricted ethics, and not in empirical or religious positivism; it can be found only in the commandment of God.

Ethical and Christian Man in Society

What is the relationship between the ethical concept of duty and the Christian concept of duty concerning man in society?

The knowledge of good and evil is the main task of ethical reflection. From the knowledge of good and evil derives the summum bonum which thus determines man's duty in life. But the ethical phenomenon remains always a Grenzereignis, an event at the border of life. It establishes the limits within which life can and must be lived. The "ought" confronts man in society with a multiplicity of duties. The fullness of life is divided by the ethical into countless separate decisions to overcome the conflict of duties. The essential characteristic of man in society as seen from the ethical perspective is man's bondage by duty.

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[1] Ibid., p. 276.

In contrast to the ethical phenomenon as an event at the frontier of life, the commandment of God encompasses the whole of life, it is the center of life. The commandment of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, is God addressing man in his historical existence. "God's commandment, which is manifested in Jesus Christ," Bonhoeffer asserts,"comes to us in the Church, in the family, in labour and in government."[1]

The commandment of God cannot be interpreted, it can only be obeyed or disobeyed. Man's acceptance of and obedience to God's commandment frees him from the uncertainties of ethical decisions. "The commandment of God," Bonhoeffer claims, "is the permission to live as man before God."[2] The commandment of God is thus simultaneously obligation and permission. Guided by God's commandment, man shares fully in life, in contrast to the ethical which allows man to share in life only within the bounds of the "ought".

Since God's commandment comprises the whole of life, the ethical is a part of God's commandment. God not only preserved the world, he also ordered the world. God's commandment, establishing the divine mandates as orders of preservation in the world, is thus the basis of moral authority invested in the offices of man. "The commandment of God," Bonhoeffer writes, "establishes on earth an inviolable superiority and inferiority which are independent of the factual relations of power and weakness."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 278. [2] Ibid., p. 281.

The ethical and the commandment of God belong together. The ethical as the criterion for man's actions in God-given orders of society is valid and therefore justified only when it is based on its origin, the commandment of God. Concerning God's commandment as man's guide in life Bonhoeffer writes:

> The purpose of the commandment lies not in the avoidance of transgression, and not in the torment of ethical conflict and decision, but in freely accepted, self-evident life in the Church, in marriage, in the family, in work and in the state.[2]

It is to these institutions of society that the present investigation now turns.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 279. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 284.

CHAPTER VIII

THE THEORY OF MANDATES

Introduction

Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Christian concept of duty culminates in the notion of vocation. The vocation of the Christian is to obey the call of Jesus Christ by leading a responsible life within God-given orders or mandates. In his Ethics Bonhoeffer expresses his views concerning the nature and purpose of these structures of life in his own theory of mandates, the main body of his social philosophy.

To further the understanding of Bonhoeffer's theory of mandates in general, a brief look at the development of this theory in Bonhoeffer's thought might be advantageous.

In his earlier writings Bonhoeffer describes the manifestations of God's commandment in history as ordinances or orders of preservation. The concept of order appears already in rudimentary form in The Communion of Saints. Discussing the intentionality of human communities and thus their extension to the limits of history, i.e., to God, Bonhoeffer writes: "Here is the entire 'holiness' of human life in community, the relation with God which is found in friendship as in marriage and the life of a people, and thus also the indissolubility of all these structures of life."[1]

As early as April, 1932, Bonhoeffer criticizes the notion of orders of creation which had been accepted by Protestant theology since the Reformation. Bonhoeffer contends that the notion of orders of creation should be replaced by the notion of orders of preservation. Bonhoeffer reiterates this demand over the years in subsequent publications and speeches. His argument may be stated briefly as follows:

The notion of orders of creation is based on the belief that God created the world in which certain orders are evident. These orders are regarded as created and willed by God for all time to come and must therefore be obeyed by man.

This notion makes it possible, Bonhoeffer argues, that any established order can be defended as a God-willed order. The essential fault of the notion of orders of creation is, in Bonhoeffer's view, the failure to realize that the created world is also the world of sin. Sin has concealed the original orders of creation and thus man's direct apprehension of God's will. The orders existing in the fallen and preserved world, therefore, are not orders of creation, revealing the divine commandment, but orders of preservation.

The commandment and thus the orders in the fallen world stem only from Christ. Christ, fulfilling God's commandment, established the new world of the new order of God. Consequently the orders of the fallen world are directed towards Christ, the new creation.

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 62.

In an essay, written in July, 1932, for the ecumenical movement, Bonhoeffer claims:

> All the orders of the world only exist in that they are directed towards Christ; they all stand under the preservation of God as long as they are still open for Christ, they are orders of preservation, not orders of creation.[1]

Consequently Bonhoeffer maintains that any order can and must be dissolved when it no longer permits the proclamation of revelation. Not inviolability and eternal validity but its openness for Christ characterizes Bonhoeffer's notion of orders of preservation. "All the orders of our fallen world," Bonhoeffer declares,"are God's orders of preservation on the to Christ."[2]

At the beginning of the church struggle in Germany, Bonhoeffer participated in the preparation of the first draft of the so-called Bethel Confession. This document of the Confessing Church proclaimed these orders of preservation: the sexes, marriage, family, people, property (labor and economy), profession, authority or government. The Confessing Church rejected the traditional notion of orders of creation which had been adopted by the German Christians to justify the claim of the nomos of the Volk as an integral part of God's commandment. E. Bethge comments on Bonhoeffer's doctrine of orders of preservation and writes:

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[1] No Rusty Swords, pp. 166-67.

[2] Creation and Fall, p. 88.

> He saw already the misunderstanding which allowed the Nazis to worship the creator of the race alongside the Lord of reconciliation. The notion of orders of preservation was meant to avoid such misunderstanding; it involves recognition of God's good activities in history, and a confession of its character of breaking-up . . . Much later he tried to deal with the same problem with the concept of 'mandates'.[1]

In conclusion it can be said that the orders of preservation are God's means of setting definite limits for man's activities in the world. The orders not only restrain the activities of men, but they also serve to prepare the world for the new creation, the Kingdom of God.

Origin of the Theory of Mandates

The sparse comments on the various orders of preservation contained in the earlier writings are developed more fully by Bonhoeffer as the theory of mandates in his Ethics. Two approaches are discernible in the fragmentary writings which comprise Bonhoeffer's Ethics. One approach derives from his contention of the oneness of all reality, the other is to be found in his discussion of the warrant for ethical discourse, i.e., the problem of moral authority.

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[1] Bethge, "Bonhoeffer's Life and Theology," p. 42.

The two approaches to the theory of mandates are best clarified by a brief examination of the relationship between the tri-partite foundation of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy and the theory of mandates in general.

The triad--Jesus Christ, the Church, and the World--as interpreted in Bonhoeffer's Christology, Ecclesiology, and his View of History, has been regarded as the foundation of his social philosophy. Since the theory of mandates is a part of Bonhoeffer's Ethics reference will be made in the following examination only to the most pertinent christological, ecclesiological and historical ideas which Bonhoeffer expressed prior to and in his Ethics.

Bonhoeffer's claim for the oneness of all reality can be traced most easily by following the development of his Christology, the key to his thought. Jesus Christ as the mediator between the reality of God and the reality of the world, the central notion of his Christology, determines his Ecclesiology and his View of History.

The key idea of vicarious action or deputyship, expressing Christ's function as mediator between God and the world, is stated in Bonhoeffer's early Christology in the formula: Christ existing as community, i.e, the church as the Body of Christ in the world. Discipleship and Christ's rule over the world are the two main themes which determine Bonhoeffer's later Christology. While discipleship characterizes the otherness of the Christian life in the world, Christ's rule over the world stresses the oneness of reality of God and the reality of the world. The ultimate, the reality of God, is united with the penultimate, the reality of the world, through Jesus Christ. Consequently, Bonhoeffer insists, there is only one reality, the self-realization of God as the ultimate reality in Jesus Christ. The Incarnation thus manifests the oneness of God and the world.

The warrant for ethical discourse or, as Bonhoeffer states, "more comprehensively, ... the warrant to proclaim the divine commandment,"[1] is the second approach to the theory of mandates. This approach is based on the concreteness of God's commandment. The concreteness of the biblical message or the concreteness of the revelation is the central theme of Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology.

God bound Himself to historical man in Jesus Christ. Christ's atonement for the fallen world established the new mankind, the church. The reconciliation of God and man is the message which the church proclaims to the world. The church bears witness to the concreteness of the biblical message from a concrete knowledge of the reality of the world and by actively participating in the affairs of men. The church, standing vicariously for mankind, proclaims Christ's rule over the world. The authority of the church is based on God's revelation in gospel and commandment.

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[1] *Ethics*, p. 279.

God, therefore, bestows authority upon the divine mandates and thus the warrant for ethical discourse or for the proclamation of the Word of God. God's commandment is made manifest in Jesus Christ. Christ's claim to the world finds concrete expression in the historical form of the earthly institutions of marriage and family, labor, the state or government, and the church.

The two approaches to the theory of mandates are also evident in Bonhoeffer's View of History. The oneness of all reality is reflected in history which, as Bonhoeffer asserts, comes from God and goes to God. Its central event is God's revelation in Jesus Christ. The historical life of Jesus Christ stands vicariously for the history of mankind. In Jesus Christ the whole reality of the world is contained, from its origin as God's creation to its destiny as the Kingdom of God. Christ stands at the center of history. God's commandment is revealed in Christ. Christ's fulfillment of God's commandment is the new creation, the end of the old world and the beginning of the new. The world is completely the world of Christ.

The second approach to the theory of mandates, i.e., the warrant to proclaim the divine commandment, can be seen in Bonhoeffer's discussion of the church's relation to the world. The church's relation to the world is determined by God's relation to the world. Christ's own concrete humanity links the church with the world. The church is the presence of Christ on earth. The church is also the place where God's Word is present. The church is for that reason the hidden center of world history. Its authority to prepare the fallen world for the coming of God's Kingdom rests on the presence of Christ and the Word.

To sum up: The mandates as the historical manifestations of God's commandment have their origin and limit in Jesus Christ who is the center of all reality and the fulfiller of God's commandment. Bonhoeffer writes:

> It is in relation to Christ that the fallen world becomes intelligible as the world which is preserved and sustained by God for the coming of Christ, the world in which we can and should live good lives as men in orders which are established.[1]

The Mandates

Bonhoeffer abandons the term "order" in favor of the concept "mandate." He believes that the traditional terms, "institution," "order," "estate," or "office," have assumed strong secular connotations and that the term "mandate" better conveys the essential character of being a divine decree. Bonhoeffer defines the term mandate in these words:

> By the term 'mandate' we understand the concrete divine commission which has its foundation in the revelation of Christ and which is evidenced by Scripture; it is the legitimation and warrant for the execution of a definite divine commandment, the conferment of divine authority on an earthly agent. The term 'mandate' must also be taken to imply the

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 139.

> claiming, the seizure and the formation of a definite earthly domain by the divine commandment. The bearer of the mandate acts as a deputy in the place of Him who assigns him his commission.[1]

Paul L. Lehmann comments on Bonhoeffer's use of the term mandate as follows:

> For Bonhoeffer, 'mandate' refers to a human structure in the world which functions in a basic way to express and to order God's purpose for the world. God's purpose is that the world shall be the place of the humanization of man, as Jesus Christ gives form and freedom and fulfillment to all that man is and does, is intended to become and can become.[2]

Three essential elements characterize Bonhoeffer's definition of the term mandate. First, a mandate is a concrete divine commission, second, it has its basis in the revelation of Christ, third, it is attested to in the Scriptures. Since Bonhoeffer's claim that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the mandates has already been examined earlier, attention is directed first to the biblical origin of the mandates, and then to their status as concrete divine commissions.

The Biblical Foundation of the Mandates

Bonhoeffer maintains that the source of the mandates cannot be found in historical forces or ideals. In other words, the institutions of marriage, family, labor, and government are not the outcome of the historical development of human society or the manifestations of ideal forms of sociality, they are of divine origin. Even the proscriptions of the Decalogue do not posses an absolute divine value. "It is only in them and through them," Bonhoeffer claims, "that God desires to be honoured and adored. That is why the second table is never to be separated from the first."[1] The law of the old covenant, which Israel put in God's place thereby making the law their God and their God a law, was fulfilled only by Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ vindicates the authority of the law," Bonhoeffer states, "God is its giver and its Lord, and only in personal communion with God is the law fulfilled."[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 287.

[2] Paul L. Lehmann, "Faith and Worldliness in Bonhoeffer's Thought," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, XXIII (Fall 1967), 40.

It is the message of the New Testament that in the person of Jesus Christ the world has been saved and reconciled with God. Consequently it is only by adherence to Christ that the law can be fulfilled. The whole world is the domain of Christ; the mandates, therefore, derive their legitimation as concrete divine commissions only from him.

The Mandates in the World

The concreteness of the mandate as a divine commission consists in Bonhoeffer's view in the execution of a definite divine commandment, which in turn implies the conferment of authority to an earthly agent. But Bonhoeffer does not refer solely to the conferment of authority, he also speaks of "the claiming, the seizure and the formation of a definite earthly domain by the divine commandment."[1] In both cases earthly agents are involved who act as deputies carrying out their divine commission as the bearers of a mandate.

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[1] Ethics, p. 358.

[2] The Cost of Discipleship, p. 138.

Bonhoeffer discusses the problem of deputyship, and thus authority within the mandates, by elaborating once more the notion of superiority and inferiority. This notion has been referred to in the previous chapter within the context of Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the warrant for ethical discourse or the problem of moral authority. "The warrant goes with the office," Bonhoeffer asserts, "and not with the person."[2] Bonhoeffer elucidates by insisting that the relation of superiority and inferiority is not identical with the earthly relation of power. Furthermore, he stresses that superiority as well as inferiority are established by the divine mandate. "Superiority and inferiority," Bonhoeffer declares, "is a relation between those persons who, whether they be superior or inferior, submit to the commission of God and to it alone."[3] What does this statement mean?

To illustrate Bonhoeffer refers to the relationship between the master and the servant. The master, Bonhoeffer contends, has his Master, i.e., God, from whom he derives his authority and thus the legitimation of his relation as the superior to his servant, the inferior. Both participate in the mandate of God.

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[1] Ethics, p. 287. [2] Ibid., p. 274. [3] Ibid., p. 289.

In his radio speech of February 1, 1933, Bonhoeffer pointed out the difference between the authority of the Leader, meaning Hitler in this instance, and the authority of an office and said:

> The Leader has authority from below, from those whom he leads, while the office has authority from above; the authority of the Leader depends on his person, the authority of an office is suprapersonal.[1]

Bonhoeffer strongly emphasizes that to preserve order in the world men must recognize that the relation between superiority and inferiority within the mandates has its foundation in God. Whenever superiority or inferiority is abused the established order collapses. In an obvious reference to the situation in Germany Bonhoeffer speaks of the rebellion of the inferior as the unleashing of "the dark forces of destruction."[2] Only the belief, Bonhoeffer asserts, that superiority (or authority) and inferiority (or obedience) are based on the divine warrant can safeguard genuine order in the world.

While the relation within a mandate is one of superiority and inferiority, the relation among the mandates is characterized by mutual cooperation and limitation. Bonhoeffer believes that the source of all mandates is God's love for men and the world as revealed in Jesus Christ and that therefore the proclamation of God's commandment is not the task of one single authority or mandate, but that it is entrusted to all mandates alike. Though the church proclaims Christ's rule over the world this office does not establish any claim to supremacy among the mandates. The authority to speak is restricted in each mandate to its own realm.

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[1] No Rusty Swords, p. 200. [2] Ethics, p. 290.

Nevertheless the mandates are not isolated from each other; they are directed towards each other, simultaneously supporting and limiting each other. Consequently superiority within a mandate, Bonhoeffer explains, is limited by God, the other mandates, and by its relation to inferiority. Bonhoeffer, commenting on the relation between God's commandment and the mandates and their interdependence, states:

> The supremacy of the commandment of God is shown precisely by the fact that it juxtaposes and coordinates these authorities in a relation of mutual opposition and complementarity and that it is only in this multiplicity of concrete correlations and limitations that the commandment of God takes effect as the commandment which is manifest in Jesus Christ.[1]

To sum up: Bonhoeffer's theory of mandates developed from his rejection of the traditional Protestant concept of orders of creation, a concept which permits the defense of any order as a "God-willed order," but which, more important, fails to recognize that the true and original orders of creation are concealed from man because of sin. Thus the orders of the fallen world are in reality orders of preservation directed towards the new world established by Christ. Bonhoeffer therefore replaces the old concepts of Protestant theology with the term "mandate" to convey clearly the character of being a divine commission. In contrast to Luther's notion of static ordinances, Bonhoeffer places the mandates in a relation of mutual cooperation and limitation to better fulfill their task, the actualization of the will of God in the world.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 279.

CHAPTER IX

THE MANDATE: MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Introduction

In Bonhoeffer's opinion, marriage is the oldest of all human institutions among the structures of life ordering the existence of man. He also describes marriage as an institution of God and as an institution of nature. Bonhoeffer defines marriage as "the union of two human beings as human beings, on the basis of the free decision of the individual."[1] Stressing the voluntary aspect of marriage, Bonhoeffer adds: "So long as human nature continues, it will lay claim to this right."[2]

The freedom of choice of the marriage partner has been and still is strongly influenced by the intimate connection of marriage and family as human institutions with other institutions which represent the religious and social experiences of man. Throughout Bonhoeffer's writings, references can be found to this close affiliation of marriage and family with religion and society. A few remarks may suffice as a general introduction to the mandate of marriage and family.

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[1] Ethics, p. 173. [2] Ibid., p. 173.

Bonhoeffer, distinguishing community from society in The Communion of Saints, considers marriage and family as typical representations of that genuine community which extends from God to God. Marriage and family are often the basis of religious groupings and also the subject of religion. Bonhoeffer even regards marriage as the smallest unit of the sanctorum communio.

He also believes that one can detect a certain resemblance between the original patriarchical structure of the family and of the church. It is as a partner in marriage and as a member of a family that the individual experiences his being a part of a larger whole, the collective person. But the relation between marriage and family, the smallest sociological units, and the collective person, Bonhoeffer claims, has its limitations. Bonhoeffer, thinking of the distinction between the spiritual and the human community, asserts:

> A marriage, a family, a friendship is quite conscious of the limitations of its community-building power; such relationships know very well, if they are sound, where the human element stops and the spiritual begins. They know the difference between physical-intellectual and spiritual community.[1]

In view of this distinction it is not surprising that Bonhoeffer compares the earthly institutions of marriage and family with its celestial counterparts: "Marriage corresponds with Christ and the congregation; the family with God the Father and the Son, and with the brotherhood of man with Christ."[1] A look at the biblical foundation and the Christian interpretation of marriage and family will show why and how Bonhoeffer arrived at this comparison.

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[1] Life Together, p. 38.

The Biblical Foundation and the Christian Interpretation of Marriage and Family

God's creation of Adam and Eve as told in Genesis is the biblical account of the divine origin of marriage and family. Man and woman, though different, belong to each other. The biblical concept of marriage, Bonhoeffer claims, stresses the oneness of man and woman and not procreation. He writes: "Marriage is not founded upon the purpose of reproduction but on the union of man and woman."[2] In the union of man and woman each is the limit and the object of love to the other. "In this common bearing of the limit by the first two human beings in community," Bonhoeffer maintains, "is tested the character of this community as the Church."[3]

In other words, Bonhoeffer believes that the community in marriage, founded upon the mutual love of two individual beings, is identical with the community of love among the believers which constitutes the church. Consequently man and woman belong together inspite of and on account of their individuality. Their belonging together finds expression in their sexuality. "Here," Bonhoeffer notes,

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[1] Ethics, p. 330. [2] Ibid., p. 179n.

[3] Creation and Fall, p. 61.

"the community of man and woman is the community derived from God, the community of love glorifying and worshipping him as the Creator. It is therefore the Church in its original form."[1]

The Fall destroyed the original community of love. Man and woman and nature lost their creatureliness. Man and woman are now divided by their self-affirmation. Hate of God and of the other as the embodiment of one's own limit results. Sexual passion, restrained only by a sense of shame as a recognition of the limit, is fallen man's attempt to restore the original unity of love. "Man's shame," Bonhoeffer says, "is his reluctant acknowledgment of revelation, of the limit, of the other person, of God."[2] Passion and shame, pleasure and pain are the consequences of sin burdening marriage in the fallen world. But marriage and family as an order of preservation is hallowed once more by Christ.

In the Christian interpretation of marriage as a divine institution the element of sex assumes considerable importance. Bonhoeffer's own writings on the subject of marriage reflect this trend.

However, it is somewhat unusual to note that Bonhoeffer as a Lutheran pastor concurs with Roman Catholicism in regarding sexuality as the essence of original sin. From

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[1] Ibid., p. 62. [2] Ibid., p. 79.

Bonhoeffer's interpretation of Genesis one can easily discern that he regards sexuality primarily as an expression of man's unrestrained self-assertion. This self-assertion, disregarding the limit set by the individuality of the other person, claims complete possession of another human being, thereby destroying the other as a creature of God. "Since the essential nature of sexuality consists in destruction," Bonhoeffer declares, "the dark secret of the originally sinful being of man is in fact preserved from generation to generation in continuing procreation." [1] But in general Bonhoeffer's attitude towards sexuality in marriage is fairly moderate, it is best summarized by the term: restraint.

Christian marriage, undertaken in the Lord and sanctified by the church, is characterized by self-control. Concerning God's commandment about marriage Bonhoeffer comments:

> God created man and woman and blessed and sanctified their marriage. Therefore God forbids licentiousness and evil desire, therefore marriage is insoluble except by death.[2]

Concerning marital sex Bonhoeffer writes: "Sex is not only the means of reproduction, but, independently of this defined purpose, it brings with it its own joy, in married life, in the love of two human beings for one another."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 79.

[2] "Gott hat Mann und Frau geschaffen und ihre Ehe gesegnet und geheiligt. Er bleibt Herr auch über die Ehe. Darum versagt er uns Zuchtlosigkeit und böse Lust, darum ist die Ehe unlösbar bis zum Tode." Gesammelte Schriften, III, p. 343. (translation mine)

Marriage and Family in Society

Marriage, Bonhoeffer insists, must be based on the free choice and the assent of the two partners. Though social, economic, religious, and biological considerations are contributing factors in making a decision, the decision itself must be the free decision of the partners involved. The basic right of marriage rests on man's desire for a child and implies the free choice of a mate. In Bonhoeffer's opinion this right began with mankind, it therefore must remain inviolable.

It is on this basis that Bonhoeffer questions the authority of the church and of the state to impose restrictions upon the individual's right to contract a marriage. Bonhoeffer, referring to the Lutheran doctrine of marriage, writes:

> The fact that a marriage is performed publicly in the presence of the state and in the presence of the Church signifies no more than the civil and ecclesiastical public recognition of marriage and its inherent rights.[2]

But Bonhoeffer does not categorically deny the state the right to regulate marriage by laws in order to protect the welfare of the community against, what he calls, "aberrations and lapses."[3] However, in Bonhoeffer's view it is more than an aberration and a lapse on the part of the church and the state when they curtail the individual's right of free choice of a marriage partner by demanding adherence to and compliance with certain rules and regulations. Bonhoeffer attacks specifically the Roman Catholic doctrine of marriage and those laws in Nazi Germany which became notorious as the Nuremberg Laws.

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[1] Ethics, p. 158. [2] Ibid., p. 175. [3] Ibid., p. 175.

The claim of the Roman Catholic Church that a marriage is valid only when both partners are members of this particular denomination transforms marriage in Bonhoeffer's opinion from an institution of nature into an institution of grace or salvation. The same infringement of the natural right inherent in marriage takes place when the state imposes racial and national restrictions. "In both cases," Bonhoeffer observes, "there is an arbitrary diminution of the abundance of marriage and consequently also of the propagation of the human race which God desires."[1] The essential nature of marriage is destroyed when the church and the state attempt to shape the coming generation by, what Bonhoeffer describes as, "the compulsory breeding of a particular human type."[2] Marriage is concluded by two individuals and not by the church or the state. The state, Bonhoeffer helds, is only the witness and the guarantor of marriage.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 174. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

Bonhoeffer also takes a stand against the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on matters of birth control. Though the removal of the embryo is permitted in extremely rare cases, abstention is the general rule for controlling the size of the family. Bonhoeffer condemns total abstention and argues: "It undermines the physical basis of marriage and threatens marriage itself with nullification and destruction by robbing it of its fundamental right."[1] Abstention is contrary to this fundamental right, namely, reproduction and the partnership of the sexes. The rigid attitude of the Roman Catholic Church, Bonhoeffer believes, can only lead to pharisaism or even to man's turning away from God.

However, Bonhoeffer's critique is not limited to Roman Catholicism. In his examination of the history of the western world, Bonhoeffer attacks the church in general for its failure to protect the integrity of marriage and family as the foundation of society.

Bonhoeffer blames the church for the collapse of parental authority which contributed to the disintegration of family life and of morality in general. Deploring the deterioration of the moral fiber of society, he complains: "[The church] has found no strong and effective answer to the contempt for chastity and to the proclamation of sexual libertinism."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 178. [2] Ibid., p. 114.

In the divine mandate of marriage and family Bonhoeffer sets forth the true meaning and purpose of marriage and family as God-willed institutions in the world.

The Mandate: Marriage and Family

It may be recalled that according to Bonhoeffer any mandate is a divinely imposed task; it is divine by virtue of its relation to Christ as its origin and limit. The mandate of marriage and family is not only blessed by God with fruitfulness so that man may share in God's power of creation, it also bestows on the parents the task of educating their children to obedience towards Christ. Commenting on the relationship between parents and children as prescribed in the Decalogue, Bonhoeffer writes:

> God gave our parents authority over us, so that we are reminded that He is the Lord of our life and not we ourselves. Thus God gave through his commandment greater honor to the father and the mother than to any other authority over us. So God invested them that they may minister to us in the place of Him and we obey them in His stead.[1]

The acceptance of marriage and family as institutions of God, Bonhoeffer asserts, gives men inner freedom and certainty. He elucidates by referring to the prohibition of adultery. Bonhoeffer believes that the divine commission of marriage can be fulfilled only when its precondition, which confronts men in the prohibition of adultery, has been overcome or left behind. Only then is marriage freely accepted and honored as a divine mandate; only then is married life a life of inner freedom and certainty before God. "In marriage," Bonhoeffer maintains, "man and woman become one in the sight of God, just as Christ becomes one with His Church."[1]

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[1] "Gott hat uns unsere Eltern zu Herren gesetzt, dass wir dadurch erinnert werden, dass Er Herr unseres Lebens ist und nicht wir selbst. So hat Gott dem Vater und der Mutter durch sein Gebot grössere Ehre gegeben als irgendeiner anderen Macht über uns. So hat Gott sie eingesetzt, dass sie an seiner Statt an uns tun und wir ihnen an seiner Statt gehorchen." Gesammelte Schriften, III, p. 342. (translation mine)

The divine mandate of marriage and family had its origin in God as a part of God's creation. The other mandate which also came into being with the act of God's creation is the divine mandate of labor. Bonhoeffer's interpretation of labor will be examined in the next chapter.

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[1] _Ethics_, p. 209.

CHAPTER X

THE MANDATE: LABOR

Introduction

"Church and Proletariat" is the subtitle of a section of The Communion of Saints which reveals Bonhoeffer's early and keen awareness of the misery of the masses in a capitalist society. He castigates the church for its close ties with the bourgeoisie and for its lack of any relevant knowledge of the living conditions of the proletariat. The church, Bonhoeffer urges, must actively participate in finding solutions to the social problems in a modern industrial society. "Serious consideration of the gospel," Bonhoeffer claims, "and open eyes for the present are the powers from which the living church will be born anew."[1]

The poverty and the squalor in a working-class district in Berlin which Bonhoeffer witnessed at the height of the depression only deepened his awareness of the alienation of the masses from the church. Nevertheless in his Christology-Lectures in the summer of 1933, Bonhoeffer expresses the hope that the cause of Christianity is not lost as long as the worker distinguishes Jesus from the church.

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 193.

Concerning the relevancy and actuality of Jesus Christ Bonhoeffer says: "Jesus can be present on the factory floor as the socialist, in politics as the idealist, in the worker's own world as the good man. He fights in their ranks against the enemy, capitalism."[1]

Jesus Christ, as has been noted, is already the focal point of the early Bonhoeffer thoughts concerning that structure or order of life which he later describes as the divine mandate of labor. What is, in Bonhoeffer's view, the basis of the mandate of labor?

The Biblical Foundation and the Christian Interpretation of Labor

The institution of labor came into being as a part of God's creation. In labor man participates in the act of creation; Adam is to dress and to keep the garden of Eden.

With the Fall, man's primal relation with nature is destroyed. Now man must till the soil in the sweat of his brow to procure his nourishment. "Thus the work of man upon the cursed ground," Bonhoeffer writes, "becomes the expression of the disunion of fallen man with nature; it is under the curse." In the fallen world man is united with nature only through work. Since God as the Creator preserved the world, labor remains a divine institution between curse and promise.

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[1] Christ the Center, p. 35. [2] Creation and Fall, p. 85.

In the Christian interpretation, work is not considered to be an end in itself. "Work for work's sake," Bonhoeffer asserts, "is not a New Testament notion."[1] But man is not allowed to be idle; it is man's duty to work. The New Testament stresses man's self-reliance. Man must support himself by his own labor and he must also exercise charity by giving to those who are in need.

The secular calling provides the Christian the opportunity to live a Christian life, to do the good works which God demands. But the Christian knows that it is not his own work which sustains him, but the blessings of God. Referring to the eighth commandment, Bonhoeffer writes: "Everything that we have belongs to God, not to us. He therefore protects our neighbor's possession through his commandment and wants us to serve Him and the neighbor with our possession."[2]

Since man's labor in general can be described as the creation of new values either by the rendering of services or through the production of goods, the problems of earthly possessions arises. How can the proclaimed simplicity of the

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[1] The Cost of Discipleship, p. 301.

[2] "Gott gehört alles, was wir haben, nicht uns. Darum schützt er das Eigentum unseres Nächsten durch sein Gebot und will, dass wir mit unserem Eigentum Ihm und dem Nächsten dienen." Gesammelte Schriften, III, p. 343. (translation mine)

Christian life be reconciled with the results of man's labors, i.e., the acquisition of material values?

Bonhoeffer points out that Jesus does not forbid the possession of property in itself. Man should not collect but use earthly goods. The accumulation of possessions does not provide security for the future, on the contrary, it results in anxiety. "It is senseless to pretend that we can make provision," Bonhoeffer notes, "because we cannot alter the circumstances of the world. Only God can take care, for it is he who rules the world."[1] If man believes that he can provide for the future out of his own strength, then he dethrones God. Consequently the Christian's work in the world is not directed towards the accumulation of material wealth, but it is concerned only with the provision for his daily needs. Bonhoeffer remarks about this Christian attitude: "Before we start taking thought for our life, our food and clothing, our work and families, we must seek the righteousness of Christ."[2]

The Christian's labor is centered upon Christ. Bonhoeffer illustrates this view of man's secular calling by pointing to the ideal fellowship of the earliest Christian communities in which everything was had in common. But the acquisitive nature of man together with his self-centeredness soon destroyed these truly Christian communities.

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[1] _The Cost of Discipleship_, p. 108. [2] _Ibid_., p. 201.

From Greek and Roman philosophy the Church Fathers adopted and incorporated into the teaching of the church the ethical justification of private property and the notion of gainful activity. Thomas Aquinas' synthesis between reason and revelation found expression in the organic conception of society in which labor assumed its proper place. Consequently in social life as willed by God a contract as the legal foundation of man's dealing with each other was not considered to be evil as such. A contract is evil only when it serves man's self-interest as a means of exploitation.

Exploitation, as has been mentioned before, violates man's natural right and thus destroys his self-respect and his sense of dignity. The exploitation of a single man to serve the self-interest of another developed into the exploitation of the whole working-class in industrial societies. The worker became a mere commodity. The result was the alienation of the worker from his work and also from the Christian religion as represented by the church. The working class became the proletariat.

What is the divine mandate of labor as compared with the actual conditions in the world of labor?

The Mandate: Labor

The place and function of labor in the responsible and therefore good life of the Christian has been referred to earlier within the context of the presentation of Bonhoeffer's notion of *vocation*. Bonhoeffer distinguishes *vocation*, man's response and total responsibility to the call of Jesus Christ, from vocation, man's station in life, including his labor, with its limited responsibilities.

Labor is one of the mandates under which the Christian lives in the world. Labor, Bonhoeffer points out, is in itself not a divine institution. Labor is divine only in relation to Christ. "The divine character of labor cannot be ascribed to its general usefulness or its intrinsic values," Bonhoeffer declares, "but only to its origin, its continuance and its goal in Jesus Christ."[1] Labor as a divinely imposed task must be subordinated in its concrete form to Jesus Christ. In other words, the limited responsibility of vocation is subordinated to the total responsibility of *vocation*. Responsibility, the key notion of the Christian life, also characterizes the mandate of labor.

Responsibility in labor exists not only between persons, it also comprises the relation of persons to the world of things. For Bonhoeffer the term thing applies to an natural object or a product of the human mind either in the form of a material or an ideal entity. Bonhoeffer describes this relation between a person and a thing as "pertinence" (*Sachgemässheit*). More specifically, pertinence is man's awareness of what Bonhoeffer calls "their original, essential and purposive relation to God and to men."[2]

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[1] *Ethics*, p. 208. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 235.

Through pertinence man's devotion or service to a cause or thing is intensified, his sense of responsibility is deepened. Pertinence also includes man's awareness that every thing has inherently its own law of being. Pertinence in any human endeavor requires the recognition and the mastery of these inherent laws, whether it is the technique required for the production of goods or the technique necessary for the administration of the state.

But situations arise in which pertinence and pertinent action must be replaced by the dictates of ultimate necessities due to extraordinary circumstances. These abnormal events require man's acceptance of free responsibility without the protection of the laws ordering and safeguarding the existence of man. Man must venture a decision and entrust the judgment to God.

The exception, however, must not become the rule. Pertinence and thus the true relation between man and things has its basis in man's responsibility to Jesus Christ. In Christ man is confronted with his responsibility to God and his neighbor. Man's labor, therefore, is justified and sanctified only by Jesus Christ. Again referring to the heavenly prototypes of the mandates, Bonhoeffer writes: "Labour corresponds with the creative service of God and Christ to the world, and of men to God."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 330.

CHAPTER XI

THE MANDATE: GOVERNMENT

Introduction

In the history of mankind, human experiences crystallized into laws, institutions, customs, and traditions designed to order and protect social life. Among the institutions of organized society, the state and the various forms of government have always occupied a place of primary importance in the thoughts of men.

In general, the problem of state and government has been presented from two basically different points of view; one philosophical, the other religious. Regarding the latter, the present investigation is solely concerned with Bonhoeffer's own theory and its sources, the Scriptures and the Lutheran doctrine of the state.

The understanding of the relation between these sources and Bonhoeffer's own view may be aided by a few remarks indicating the basic ideas underlying the philosophical interpretation of state and government.

Whenever the necessity of a state was admitted in philosophical thought, its essential features were the existence of a government and a constitution. Throughout the centuries thinkers developed various forms of state-organizations and declared them to be representations of the ideal state. The notion of the ideal state served as a criterion to judge the existing form of government and also the actual conditions of social institutions within the state. Their value was determined according to the degree in which they promoted the realization of the human ideal.

In contrast to the philosophical interpretation of the state as a product of man's reason, Bonhoeffer holds that the state is of divine origin. In both cases, however, the value of the state as a political organization is determined by its success or failure to reach the proclaimed ideal.

While philosophy envisions various types of utopias, Christianity has as its goal the Kingdom of God. For this eschatological goal the church prepares mankind by the proclamation of the Word of God; but what, in Bonhoeffer's view, is the task of the state or the *Obrigkeit*, to use Luther's term, which Bonhoeffer has in mind when he speaks of the divine mandate of government?

Before preceding, it might be helpful to clarify the meaning of Luther's term *Obrigkeit*, and also to note Bonhoeffer's distinction between the concept of "state" and "government." An explanation may prevent misunderstanding Bonhoeffer's view concerning the divine mandate of government, especially with regard to his earlier writings on the subject.

The archaic concept Obrigkeit refers to a station or office in the world which is invested with authority by God and which therefore commands the obedience of those under its dominion. Obrigkeit is generally identified with any kind of governing authority, ranging from the elder of a village to the emperor or the president of a state. The hierarchical order of the secular world--which also applies to the ecclesiastical world--is best compared with the relation between superiority and inferiority which Bonhoeffer expounded earlier.

Concerning the concepts state and government, Bonhoeffer asserts that the New Testament does not know the concept of the state. This concept derived from pagan antiquity and includes the ruler as well as the ruled. Instead of the state, the New Testament speaks of government with its connotation of power. This power is not restricted to the legal institution of government, creating justice and equality before the law in the state. Government includes the whole range of human relations in the sense of moral authority. Therefore the authority of government, in its widest application, derives from God and not from society. Bonhoeffer offers this definition: "Government is divinely ordained authority to exercise worldly dominion by divine right. Government is deputyship for God on earth. It can be understood only from above."[1]

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[1] Ethics, p. 332.

On the basis of this definition Bonhoeffer reviews very briefly the theory which derives the state from man's nature. The state as a product of human nature (the key notion of the Aristotelian and Thomist doctrine) and the state as the fulfillment of God's will in the people (the Hegelian notion of the state) are both rejected by Bonhoeffer. He claims that the conception of the state as a community fails to make sufficiently clear the derivation of government as a coercive power over and against the members of the community. "Whenever the basis of the state is sought in the created nature of man," Bonhoeffer notes, " the concept of government is broken up and is then reconstructed from below, even when this is not at all intended."[1] Government as divinely ordained authority must remain the essential feature which characterizes and validates the state as state.

How, in Bonhoeffer's opinion, does the Bible account for the divine origin of government and how has this notion been interpreted in the Christian tradition?

The Biblical Foundation of the State

Bonhoeffer describes the state as an ordered community. In The Communion of Saints, it may be recalled, Bonhoeffer develops the concept of community within his doctrine of the primal state(Urstand). But is the pure form of social community as it existed in the primal state also the original form of the state or, as Bonhoeffer asks: "Is the state a consequence of the Fall, that is, is it sin; or is it willed by God?"[1] A brief recapitulation of Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the primal state may aid in clarifying the problem of the origin of the state.

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[1] Ibid., p. 334.

From the basic social category, the I-Thou relation, Bonhoeffer derives the concept of the community in a threefold way. First, community is based on the direct relation of man as a free spiritual being with God and other men. Secondly, on the basis of what Bonhoeffer calls man's material spirituality, community derives from man's interaction as a ultimate unit with others. Since individual and social being are interdependent, the community is the collective person which as a social unity is also an individual person. Thirdly, the community is constituted by the reciprocal will of its members. Community, willed by God, is an end in itself; and society, willed by men, is a means to an end (Zweckverband). Both possess an objective spirit, but only the objective spirit of the community is an ethical person. The objective spirit of the community interacts with its members and with other communities as collective persons.

In the original community God loves men and rules, and men love God and obey. Community and the relation between ruler and ruled are already present as part of God's creation in the primal state (Urstand). Concerning the state's (Staat) origin Bonhoeffer, therefore, asserts: "The state in itself is willed by God, and good."[1]

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 63.

But the state exists in history, that is, after the Fall. With the Fall the nature of the state is changed. "It is the consequence of sin," Bonhoeffer maintains, "that the power of punishment and compulsion is necessary."[2]

Ethical atomism and selfishness characterize man's existence in history. Consequently, social life is possible only through the creation of law and order. A community in which life is ordered and safeguarded by a governing authority is a state. Concerning law and order in the fallen world, Bonhoeffer writes:

> God's action does not break through the new laws of earth and men, it enters into them, it is at the same time their restraint and order. That is, it refers to their evil, their fallen state (Zustand).[3]

Thus the state (Staat) as government, i.e., as a coercive power and the protector of justice, has its origin in the Fall. The state as government is an order of preservation which through law and the sword, i.e., its coercive power, maintains order in the world. "Government," Bonhoeffer declares, "is order in the world, an order which bears the authority of God. Government is not itself of the world, but of God."[4]

[1,2] Ibid. [3] Creation and Fall, p. 88.

[4] Ethics, p. 336.

In conclusion, it can be said that in Bonhoeffer's view the biblical account of the state reveals two aspects; the state in its origin as the pure form of social community is good; but the state as an ordered empirical community in history is sinful.

How does Bonhoeffer describe the historical state as looked at from the Christian perspective?

The Christian Interpretation of the State

It has been shown in an earlier chapter that Bonhoeffer's examination of the history of the western world is completely determined by his Christology. "The meaning of history," Bonhoeffer claims, "becomes evident only in the humiliated Christ."[1] In view of this statement by Bonhoeffer, it is not surprising to note that Bonhoeffer's Christology is also his criterion for evaluating the state, since history is made by the state. The strong christocentric orientation of Bonhoeffer's view of state and government is clearly evident when he declares: "There has been a state in the proper sense only as long as there has been a church."[2]

Why does Bonhoeffer insist that the existence of the proper state is dependent upon the existence of the church? For the moment the following should suffice to elucidate Bonhoeffer's statement and to establish the christological foundation of the state. The relation between the church and the state will be discussed in full after the presentation of the mandate of the church.

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[1] Christ the Center, p. 64. [2] Ibid., p. 65.

The Christological Foundation of the State

The life of Jesus Christ stands vicariously for the history of mankind. Christ fulfilled the history of mankind and thus reunited man with God. After the death and the resurrection of Christ the church is the presence of Christ in the world. In Bonhoeffer's view the church is the hidden center of the state, judging and justifying its nature.

The state, establishing law and order, helps to prepare a people for the fulfillment of history, the coming of the Kingdom of God. But the church is also the boundary of the state, the dissolution of all human order as symbolized by the cross. Thus Christ is present in history as the church and as the state. Only from Christ does the state derive its justification as the creator of order in the world.

Bonhoeffer substantiates this assertion by pointing out that government, like all created things, is subject to Jesus Christ as the mediator between God and His creation. However, Bonhoeffer refers to the specific relation between Christ and government, established by his trial and crucifixion. Christ's own submission to government affirms government as a divinely ordained authority. "The true basis of government," Bonhoeffer writes, "is therefore Jesus Christ Himself."[1] Christ's own attitude towards the worldly authorities is reflected in the New Testament.

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[1] *Ethics*, p. 337.

The New Testament View of the State

The New Testament is not concerned with the state as such, i.e., the external and temporal form of an ordered community, but with the distinction between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world. The New Testament, however, states explicitly the Christian's relationship to the authorities of the secular world by stressing the Christian's responsibility and obedience to the state as government. In the Christian view, therefore, resistance to the power of the state is resistance to the God-willed authority. Referring to the key idea in St Paul's letter to the Romans, Bonhoeffer writes:"It is immaterial whether the power be good or bad, what matters is that the Christian should overcome evil by good."[1]

Internal disputes concerning basic dogmatic problems of the Christian faith together with the influence of Greek and Roman philosophy and the disintegration of the Roman Empire brought about a considerable change in Christian thought with regard to the individual's and the church's relation with the state.

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[1] The Cost of Discipleship, p. 296.

The State in the Christian Tradition

The New Testament's strong emphasis on the Lordship of Christ over the whole world was developed in Patristic and Scholastic thought into a thinking in two spheres, a sacred and a profane. The result was the subordination of the secular to the spiritual realm. Throughout the Middle Ages the church was considered to be the superstructure which the state served by maintaining order. Bonhoeffer comments on the Christian view of state and society which prevailed up to the Reformation and writes: "With the help of Aristotle and the idea of organism the life of the state and of society in its Christian form was established and recognised as having natural right."[1]

It was Luther who objected to this view and claimed that God's will is revealed only in the Scriptures and not in historical institutions of society. Moreover, in the doctrine of the two kingdoms Luther reaffirmed the Lordship of Christ over the world. Church and state both serve one master, Jesus Christ, who unites the faithful in the invisible true Catholic Church. Luther's doctrine of the three ordinances (ecclesiastical, political, economical) is the basis from which Bonhoeffer developed his theory of mandates. Luther's view of Obrigkeit, the source of Bonhoeffer divine mandate of government, may be stated briefly.

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 64.

The Lutheran Doctrine of the State

The Lutheran doctrine of the state as set forth in the Confessio Augustana (Augsburg Confession) interprets the state more from the Decalogue, the law, than from the gospel. The government (Obrigkeit as "the powers that be") is to serve God by executing the laws of the Decalogue through the sword. The sword symbolizes the God-given authority of the government to punish any transgression of the laws. However, the Lutheran doctrine also assumes that reason dictates to government the same laws as the revealed law. In the Lutheran view the laws of reason are innate in man and compel him to perform the works demanded by the Decalogue.

The Lutheran doctrine does not consider the possibility of a conflict between the natural law and the Decalogue; it nevertheless concedes the weakness of human reason and thus regards the Decalogue as the ultimate criterion. Though natural law can never claim divine authority in opposition to the revealed law, it can be represented as the basis for action by the government.

While the Lutheran doctrine of the state emphasizes man's work with regard to the Decalogue, it also refers to man's faith as the prerequisite of all works in relation to the gospel. The fulfillment of the law by external achievement is supplemented by the gospel's call to the faith for all men. But the call of the gospel is also the call to order among men and in the world. It is the task of government to insure justice, peace and order. It is the gospel rather than the Decalogue which Bonhoeffer considers the true basis of the divine mandate of government.

The Mandate: Government

Bonhoeffer's own theory of the divine mandate of government may be regarded as the culmination and the bringing into focus of the numerous strands of Christian thought which contributed to the formulation of his own view.

The essential task of the government, which finds already present in the world the divine mandates of marriage and family, and of labor, is to preserve what has been created in that order which was willed by God. Consequently, the government, responsible for the welfare of all, must insure the freedom and the protection of all mandates in the state. It does this, on the one hand, by its coercive power which compels everyone to live within the restraints of the laws. On the other hand, the government exercises its power of punishment to enforce the laws.

Freedom and responsibility characterize the Christian life, and responsible life is only possible under a government which is respected as a divinely ordained authority. Bonhoeffer describes the nature of the divine mandate of government in these words: "By the establishment of law and by the force of the sword the governing authority preserves the world for the reality of Jesus Christ. Everyone owes obedience to this governing authority - for Christ's sake."[1]

Bonhoeffer discusses the divine character of the mandate of government as it is disclosed in three diffrent aspects, namely, in its being, its task, and in its claim.

Concerning the reality of government, i.e., its being, Bonhoeffer contends that it is an institution of God which is completely independent of the manner of its coming into being in the world. But government is exercised in history by fallible men. Even though government is stained by guilt, Bonhoeffer insists that it will never be deprived of its divine dignity since its power is from God. The guilt of the government is taken up by Jesus Christ, the mediator, who through his death reconciled government with God. Therefore, Bonhoeffer holds, government has its existence solely in Christ.

The task of the government also reveals its divine character. Only by carrying out this task, Bonhoeffer asserts, is the being of government fulfilled. The ultimate purpose of government is the service of Christ.

In order to serve Christ the government is endowed with judicial authority and also the right to educate for goodness or, in Bonhoeffer's words, "outward justice or righteousness."[2] Bonhoeffer, closely following the Lutheran doctrine of Obrigkeit, thinks that the criterion for the actions of government to achieve outward justice must be the second table of the Decalogue.

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[1] Ethics, pp. 210-11. [2] Ibid., p. 340.

However, government is not limited to Christian communities, it exists as a divine commission to protect life also in non-Christian communities. Bonhoeffer believes that the content of the second table is also evident in what he calls "the inherent law of historical life itself."[1] This does not mean, Bonhoeffer asserts, that the state is based on natural law. In Bonhoeffer's opinion the knowledge of the inherent law of historical life is not a question of the state, but one of government (Obrigkeit). Though the pagan government does not understand itself as being based in Christ, it acquires through providence the same knowledge for carrying out its task as that which is disclosed to the government which is aware of its foundation in Christ. Important is that the government, whether or not it is aware of its true basis, secures outward justice and thus preserves life and keeps it open for Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer notes: "Government serves Christ no matter whether it is conscious or unconscious of this mission or even whether it is true or untrue to it . . . It serves Him by its very existence."[2]

The divine character of government is also evident in its claim to obedience. This claim derives from and is justified by its divine commission, it is therefore God's claim. Obedience to the government is thus the duty of the Christian. If the government violates its commission, the Christian must refuse to obey the demands of government for the sake of Christ. But disobedience, Bonhoeffer points out, must be based on a concrete decision referring to a particular case, and action must be undertaken on one's own responsibility. "A historical decision," Bonhoeffer writes, "cannot be resolved entirely in ethical terms; there remains a residuum of the venture of action. That is true both of the government and of its subjects."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 341. [2] Ibid., p. 342.

To sum up: the divine character of government is evident in its reality, i.e., its being, as an institution of God, in its task as service to Christ, and in its claim to obedience on account of its power and its mission which derived from God. Bonhoeffer again draws an analogy between the government and the state on earth and its counterparts in a future divine world and writes: "Government corresponds with the dominion of Christ in eternity; the state corresponds with the polis of God."[2]

In the presentation of the theory of mandates in general it has been pointed out that the relation among the individual mandates is one of mutual cooperation and limitation. Since the task of government to establish law and order requires its involvement with other mandates, where, in Bonhoeffer's view, does the power of government end?

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[1] Ibid., p. 344. [2] Ibid., p. 330.

As a matter of principle, Bonhoeffer contends, the relationship between government and the other mandates is not of a constitutive but of a regulative nature. Therefore, the divine mandates of marriage and family and of labor, including agriculture, industry, commerce, science and art, retain their own rights, but they are subject to the supervision and limited direction by the government. The protection of the welfare of the community as a whole must be the government's sole criterion for decreeing laws. "If government asserts its authority beyond the limits of its assigned task," Bonhoeffer states, "it will in the long run forfeit its genuine authority over these fields."[1]

Within the context of his exposition of the divine mandate of government Bonhoeffer refers also to that entity over which the government exercises authority, the people. In Genesis, Bonhoeffer points out, reference is made to the divine and also to the natural origin of what he calls "the order or institution of the people."[2] The Scriptures, however, do not speak of a special commission of God for the people. "The people," Bonhoeffer writes, "is a historical reality, which in a special sense has reference to the one people of God, the Church."[3] Bonhoeffer's view of the relation between the people and the church will be discussed in the following presentation of the mandate of the church.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 345. [2] _Ibid_., p. 345. [3] _Ibid_., pp. 345-46.

To sum up: The essential feature of Bonhoeffer's theory of the divine mandate of government is his claim that the true basis of government is Jesus Christ. Christ is the mediator between government and God. Government is divinely ordained authority which creates order in the world by the establishment and the enforcement of law. Government serves Christ by preserving the world. Though government is the rule of fallible men, serving as God's deputies, government as a divine institution will never lose its divine dignity. It is the duty of the Christian to obey his worldly authorities, whose function is of a regulative nature. If the government fails in its task, the Christian must decide and act according to the maxim proclaimed at the Augsburg Confession and restated in the Bethel Confession during the church struggle in Germany: "One should rather obey God than men."[1]

Obedience to God's commandment, then, is the Christian's final and absolute criterion to determine his actions as a citizen of the state. God's will as revealed in the Scriptures is proclaimed in the church. What is in Bonhoeffer's view the divine mandate of the church in the world?

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[1] "Man soll Gott mehr gehorchen als den Menschen." Gesammelte Schriften, I, p. 102. (translation mine)

CHAPTER XII

THE MANDATE: CHURCH

Introduction

The theory of mandates represents the main body and also the culmination of Bonhoeffer's writings on social philosophy. In the theory of mandates Bonhoeffer summarizes the thoughts expressed in his earlier writings by rendering a comparatively concise account of the essential and characteristic features of each mandate.

However, a comparison of Bonhoeffer's writings on the subject matter of the first three mandates with those concerning the fourth mandate, the church, leaves no doubt that Bonhoeffer wrote as a theologian and not as a social philosopher. Consequently, references to the mandate of marriage and family, the mandate of labor, and to the mandate of government are scattered throughout his writings. It therefore became necessary to search out, collect, and assemble those relevant passages in Bonhoeffer's writings which reveal the origin and development of each mandate.

The mandate of the church does not present this difficulty. The church occupies the center of attention in Bonhoeffer's lifelong quest for the presence of Christ. It has been shown in the three introductory chapters that Bonhoeffer's Christocentrism proves to be the key to his thought and thus also the foundation of his social philosophy. Bonhoeffer's Christocentrism is intimately linked with his understanding of the church, which may be restated briefly:

Bonhoeffer's Christology is primarily concerned with Christ as the origin of the church, with the reign of Christ over the world and with the second coming of Christ to establish the Kingdom of God. Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology examines the nature of the church as the essential church, the Body of Christ, and its reality as the empirical church. In his survey of the history of the western world Bonhoeffer evaluates the successes and failures of the church in carrying out its task.

Bonhoeffer's detailed discussion of the origin and goal, the nature and the historical existence of the church seems to be an adequate background for following his interpretation of the divine mandate of the church in the world.

The Divine Mandate of the Church

Marriage and family, labor, and government are divine mandates which are given by God to all mankind, Christians and non-Christians alike. Man is a partner in marriage, a member of a family and also a citizen of a state and thereby subject to its governing authority. Consequently all three mandates affect man's worldly existence. The divine mandate of the church, however, is different from these first three mandates; it is a specifically Christian mandate, namely, the proclamation of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

The mandate of the church, therefore, extends to all mandates. Thus it is not man who lives as man within the three structures of life, but it is the Christian who is simultaneously a marriage partner, a family member and a citizen. This does not mean the division of man's life into a worldly and a divine sphere. On the contrary, all mandates are concerned with the whole man and the oneness of all reality. The center of all reality is Jesus Christ; and it is for this reason that the church is in the world to witness this relatedness of the world to Christ. Bonhoeffer writes: "Reality, therefore, in all its multiplicity is ultimately one; it is one in the incarnate God Jesus Christ, and precisely this is the testimony which the Church must give."[1]

The task of the church is to proclaim what Bonhoeffer best expressed in the key notion of his Christology: Jesus Christ is the mediator between the reality of God and the reality of the world. To impart to mankind that God reconciled the world with Himself in Jesus Christ, i.e., the salvation of the whole world, and the call to follow Christ is the divine mandate of the church. The church derives its right and authority to proclaim the Word of God solely from its being the presence of Christ in the world standing vicariously for all mankind. The church is the Body of Christ.

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[1] Ethics, p. 221.

How does the empirical church carry out its mandate in the world? In other words, how can the reality of Christ become real in the world?

Bonhoeffer believes, as has been pointed out earlier, that there is only one church, the church of faith which is ruled by the Word of Christ. Consequently the reality of Christ becomes real first in the church, namely, in the preaching and in the organization of the church, and then in the Christian life. Bonhoeffer comments:

> The Church as a self-contained community is subject to a twofold ordinance and rule. She must be adapted to the purpose of the world, and precisely in this she must be adapted to her own purpose as the place at which Jesus Christ is present.[1]

This is not the place to discuss at length the internal functions of the church. Nevertheless a few of Bonhoeffer's important comments must be referred to in order to understand correctly the mandate of the church in the world.

Whenever reference is made to the church, Bonhoeffer points out, one must distinguish between the spiritual office or ministry and the congregation of the Christians. The distinction between superiority and inferiority, in Bonhoeffer's view the basis of moral authority in the first three mandates, applies also to the church as organization or institution.

Concerning the church's own purpose, Bonhoeffer believes that the proclamation of the Word of God is the task which is bestowed upon the ministry by God and not by the congregation. The ministry gives testimony to Jesus Christ by interpreting and preaching the Scripture; the congregation listens. Bonhoeffer emphasizes the superiority of the office of proclamation, which seems to contradict the Lutheran doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers, by saying: "Scripture is essentially the property of the office of preaching and it is the preaching which properly belongs to the congregation."[1] In other words, the congregation listens to the sermon which interprets a given text of the Scripture. The distinction between superiority and inferiority in the church is in Bonhoeffer's opinion the divinely ordained relationship between the spiritual office and the congregation.

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[1] Ibid., p. 301.

Besides the public preaching the church's own purpose also includes church discipline. Both belong together in order to make the church truly the place where Christ is present and to enable the church to fulfill its purpose in the world.

The task of the church, to state it again, is to testify in words and actions to Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of the world.

The Christian life of the congregation in the world is marked by the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ. In the Incarnation God shows men that He exists for them. The Christians, therefore, do not live for themselves but for God and other men. The Cross signifies simultaneously the world's rejection of God and God's reconciliation with the world. Through Christ's atonement man has become free to live before God in the fallen world. "A genuine worldliness," Bonhoeffer maintains, "is possible solely and exclusively on the basis of the proclamation of the cross of Jesus Christ."[1] Finally, Resurrection means that the old world of sin and death has been overcome. Christ is the Lord of the new world in which everything is directed towards him.

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[1] Ibid., p. 249.

The church's proclamation of the Word of God is addressed to all men, but only where the Word is accepted is there the congregation. Bonhoeffer strongly emphasizes again that the divine mandate of proclamation is not identical with the law of the congregation. He clarifies the relationship between the divine mandate of the church and the law of the church as follows:

> The peculiarity of the divine mandate of the Church lies in the fact that the proclamation of the lordship of Christ over the world must always be distinguished from the 'law' of the Church as a community, while on the other hand the Church as a community is not to be separated from the office of proclamation.[2]

The task of the congregation is twofold. It serves the ministry in the effective proclamation by living a Christian life in the world. In addition, the congregation acts as a deputy for all mankind. The congregation is thus the mediator between the divine mandate of the church and the world.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 298. [2] _Ibid_., p. 300.

"The congregation," Bonhoeffer notes, "has become the goal and the centre of all God's dealing with the world."[1] The church as ministry and congregation is, as Bonhoeffer writes in another fragment of his Ethics, "nothing but a section of humanity in which Christ has really taken form."[2]

Bonhoeffer's claim that the church itself is divided from the world and that the divine mandate of the church is different from all other mandates, rests solely on the fact that the church affirms in faith God's reconciliation with the world. It is on this basis that the church summons the world to submit to the dominion of Christ. But the proclamation of the Word of God does not entitle the church to a privileged position in the world. Concerning the relation of the church to the other mandates Bonhoeffer remarks:

> Jesus Christ's claim to lordship, which is proclaimed by the Church, means at the same time the emancipation of family, culture and government for the realization of their own essential character which has its foundation in Christ.[3]

The heteronomy and autonomy of the mandates is overcome by what Bonhoeffer calls "Christonomy," the reign of Christ over the world.

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[1] Ibid., p. 301. [2] Ibid., p. 83. [3] Ibid., p. 299.

Church and World

Does the divine mandate of the church imply that the church can offer solutions to the problems of the world?

Bonhoeffer's evaluation of the history of the church in the western world shows that the church had failed to master the difficulties besetting mankind. In general, Bonhoeffer believes that Christianity cannot provide solutions to all the problems of the world. Nevertheless, he insists that Christianity must make its voice heard concerning the affairs of the world. What, in Bonhoeffer's opinion, is the word of the church to the world?

Bonhoeffer points to Jesus who spoke of man's redemption instead of offering solutions to human problems. Bonhoeffer even suggests that the unsolved problems of mankind may serve as a reminder of man's fallen state and his need for redemption. It is essential to recognize, Bonhoeffer maintains, that Christian thinking proceeds from God to the world and not from the world to God. God made known His will in the Decalogue and in the gospel. Consequently Bonhoeffer argues: "The church's word to the world can be no other than God's Word to the world. This word is Jesus Christ and salvation in His name."[1]

Not any rational knowledge, but the law and the gospel must be the sole basis of the church's word to the world. By exclusive adherence to law and gospel the church avoids a double morality, one referring to the world, the other to the congregation. "The whole law and the whole gospel of God," Bonhoeffer insists, "belong equally to all men."[1]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 357.

Law and gospel are not two different claims upon man, they are one in that they demand the Christian's obedience in faith to the commandments of God in the divine mandates of the worldly order. The Decalogue defines an area, Bonhoeffer holds, in which obedience to God and belief in God's revelation in Jesus Christ is possible.

Though it is impossible for the church to derive from the faith in Christ a concrete earthly order, the church must oppose any order in the world which obstructs belief in Christ. The church, therefore, is concerned with secular institutions only in so far as it involves its task, namely, the preparing of the world for the second coming of Christ. This is the ultimate reason why the church takes a stand with regard to specific social problems and conditions.

Whenever belief is impaired and the true nature of man is violated, the church as the divine mandate of God declares the existing conditions to be wrong, and with the help of Christian specialists offers suggestions to remedy social ills. Again Bonhoeffer points to the distinction between the spiritual office and the congregation in the church. It is the task of the spiritual office, having its right and authority from God, to pass judgment on the secular institutions in the world; it is the task of the congregation, living as Christians within the three other mandates, to actually carry out in the world the demands of the spiritual office. "The concrete form of the law of God in commerce and industry, the state, etc.," Bonhoeffer remarks, "must be perceived and discerned by those who work responsibly in these fields."[1]

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 358.

The heteronomy and autonomy of the divine mandates is especially pronounced in the relationship between the state and the church. What, in Bonhoeffer's view, is the proper relation between government and church?

Government and Church

As has been stated repeatedly, Christ is present in all mandates and rules over all mandates. Christonomy overcomes the heteronomy of all mandates and the autonomy of each mandate. The reign of Christ, therefore, is Bonhoeffer's criterion for determining the proper relation between government and church.

Following the true meaning of the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms, Bonhoeffer asserts that government and church, though having separate tasks, have the same ultimate purpose, namely, the service of Christ. The question arises, how are the specific responsibilities of the worldly and the ecclesiastical authority delimited so that a Christian life under law and order becomes possible? Bonhoeffer answers this question by juxtaposing the claims and the responsibilities of government and church.

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[1] Ibid., p. 362.

Government can carry out its task only when its authority is respected by all. Consequently the government's claim to obedience includes the church. Since the church comprises the ministry and the congregation, the church's obedience to government is of a twofold nature. The relation between the government and the spiritual office is determined by the principle of the separation of state and church. Government and the spiritual office in itself are completely independent of each other. Non-interference dictates their existence side by side. However, the government's claim to obedience is fully effective concerning the members of the congregation. Since the individual Christian is also a citizen, he owes obedience to the governing authorities. "As a citizen," Bonhoeffer notes, "the Christian does not cease to be a Christian, but he serves Christ in a different way."[1]

In return for the government's claim to obedience the church demands of government the proper fulfillment of its task which, as the church claims, is possible only in obedience to Jesus Christ. The church does not insist that the state pursues a Christian policy, but that the state renders protection to insure the freedom of worship and of a peaceful Christian life. Consequently Bonhoeffer argues that the government has what he calls an "ecclesiastical responsibility."[1] This responsibility consists above all in the religious neutrality of the government, whether one or several religions are practized within the state. In Bonhoeffer's view the support of the practice of religion by the government is of vital importance to its own existence; he writes: "A government which fails to recognize this undermines the root of the true obedience and, therefore, also its own authority."[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 347.

The government's responsibility to the church and Christian life is reciprocated by the church's responsibility to the government. Again Bonhoeffer refers to the distinction between the spiritual office and the congregation in the church. Concerning the responsibility of the spiritual office Bonhoeffer points out that this responsibility is to be understood in its widest application, namely, as responsibility for the general conditions of life in the state. The church's task in the world includes the protection of public life against disintegration. The spiritual office, Bonhoeffer declares, "shall with all due reference address government directly in order to draw its attention to shortcomings and errors which must otherwise imperil its governmental office."[3]

While Bonhoeffer maintains that the spiritual office is politically responsible, he claims the opposite with regard to the individual Christian. "The individual Christian," Bonhoeffer asserts, "cannot be made responsible for the action of government, and he must not make himself responsible for it."[1] The individual Christian is responsible only for the sphere of his personal life, private and public. If each Christian fulfills his task in the world, Bonhoeffer contends, individual responsibility extends to public responsibility and thus to government.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 348. [2] _Ibid_., p. 348. [3] _Ibid_., p. 350.

Bonhoeffer concludes his remarks concerning the relation between the government and the church by observing that the complexity of this relation between the two divine mandates cannot be regulated by a single general principle. "No constitutional form, Bonhoeffer declares, "can as such exactly represent the actual relative closeness and remoteness of government and Church. Government and Church are bound by the same Lord and are bound together."[2] The recognition and the acknowledgement of the reign of Christ over the world is in Bonhoeffer's view the best and only basis not only for the cooperation between government and church, but for all mandates. Only the autonomy of each mandate and the heteronomy of all mandates under Christ make possible a responsible Christian life in the world.

The exposition of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy will be concluded by summarizing its essential features as they apply to the Christian life in the world.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 350. [2] _Ibid_., p. 351.

CHAPTER XIII

SUMMARY

Introduction

Bonhoeffer wrote as a theologian and not as a social philosopher. Consequently, it is not surprising that his relatively few and fragmentary writings pertaining to social philosophy proper are characterized by a Christian point of view. It can be said that the key events in the Christian interpretation of the history of mankind determine Bonhoeffer's social philosophy in general. Creation, Fall, Incarnation and Eschaton are the vantage points from which Bonhoeffer scrutinizes the individual and society. Thus the central and most important event for Bonhoeffer is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Christocentrism is the key to Bonhoeffer's thought and the foundation of his social philosophy. Bonhoeffer's social philosophy may be regarded, therefore, as literally a "Christian" social philosophy.

Social philosophy, in general, is defined as a normative science which interprets social processes by the critical evaluation of different value structures in different societies. Bonhoeffer describes social philosophy as "the science of the original and essential nature of sociality."[1]

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 19.

Its task is twofold. It investigates what Bonhoeffer calls ultimate social relations and, moreover, the origins of sociality in man's spiritual life.

In Bonhoeffer's opinion, spiritual life and social life are essentially connected. Consequently, Bonhoeffer maintains that the norms of social philosophy for evaluating the actual conditions in historical communities must be derived from an investigation of the ultimate social relations existing in the original community of the primal state (_Urstand_), i.e., before the Fall.

In Bonhoeffer's view the Fall marks not only the appearance of sin and man's defection from God, but also the coming into being of empirical communities and the beginning of human history. Human history as seen from the Christian perspective is the history of salvation. The fallen but preserved world is reconciled with God by Jesus Christ who established the new mankind, the church, to prepare the way for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ, the mediator between the reality of God and the reality of the world, is thus the ultimate value and the absolute criterion of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy.

While social philosophy investigates the original community in pre-history and thus provides the norms for evaluating empirical communities in history, sociology, Bonhoeffer contends, studies "the structures of communities and the acts of will that constitute them."[1]

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 53.

From Bonhoeffer's definition of social philosophy and its twofold task, two general themes emerged which made it possible to put Bonhoeffer's fragmentary writings into a coherent framework of reference.

The purpose of the first theme was to establish the foundation of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy by substantiating his claim that spiritual and social life are essentially connected.

The purpose of the second theme was to present Bonhoeffer's social philosophy proper by ascertaining that sociality has its origin in man's spiritual nature.

These two general themes are linked by Bonhoeffer's Christocentrism which pervades all aspects of his social philosophy, ranging from the individual person to the collective person, from the relation between the individual and the collective person to the relation between collective persons.

The Foundation of Bonhoeffer's Social Philosophy

Bonhoeffer's assertion that spiritual and social life are united in Jesus Christ constitutes the foundation of his social philosophy. Bonhoeffer elaborates this claim in his christological, ecclesiological and historical writings. The triad: Jesus Christ, the Church and the World or Bonhoeffer's Christology, Ecclesiology and his View of History, illustrates that the Christian encounters Christ not only as an individual believer, but also as a member of the church and as a member of society. Bonhoeffer's quest for the presence of Christ attempts to prove that man as a spiritual being is not solitary but also a *homo socialis*.

The above-mentioned writings of Bonhoeffer will be summarized below from the perspective of social philosophy. Only those key ideas or essential features will be referred to which contribute significantly to the formation of Bonhoeffer's views concerning the individual and the collective person. Bonhoeffer's prison letters are excluded from this summary since they are intended to be the starting point for the evaluation of his social philosophy.

Jesus Christ

The person of Jesus Christ and his presence in the world is the central theme of Bonhoeffer's Christology. Concerning the person of Christ, Bonhoeffer contends that Christ is not removed from the world and from historical man. Christ's life and death established the new mankind. Christ is present *pro me* (for me) and *pro nobis* (for us). Since man is placed in history and nature as well, Bonhoeffer regards Christ as the center of human existence, of history and of nature.

However, two distinctly different interpretations characterize Bonhoeffer's view of the presence of Christ in the world. Both interpretations significantly influence Bonhoeffer's social philosophy, specifically his views about the individual Christian's and the church's place and function in the world. Nevertheless both interpretations of Christ's presence in the world are linked by the key notion of vicarious action. In Bonhoeffer's view Christ's life and death was a vicarious action for all mankind which reconciled God and man.

Early Christology

In his earlier christological writings Bonhoeffer maintains that the reconciliation between God and man can take place only in the community of believers, the new mankind, the church. Christ is present in the life of the individual only when he is a believer, a member of the community of saints. The essential or normative church is the Body of Christ (*corpus Christi*); it is at the same time a community of persons and a collective person.

Since in Bonhoeffer's opinion the essential church is real only as empirical church, the church, additionally, is also an institution invested with authority exhibiting a hierarchical order. While in the essential church the relationship between the individual and the collective person is one of equality, the relationship in the empirical church is determined by the distinction between superiority (the spiritual office or ministry) and inferiority (the congregation). But vicarious action is the criterion determining both relationships. "Vicarious action," Bonhoeffer asserts, "is the life-principle of the new mankind."[1] Man is truly a Christian only in the church. Christ existing as community, the church, is the formula in which Bonhoeffer expresses Christ's presence in the world in his early Christology.

Later Christology

In his later christological writings Bonhoeffer abandons this rather narrow formula and claims instead the Lordship of Christ over the world and thus the oneness of all reality. Bonhoeffer still maintains the otherness of the Christian life as distinguished from the worldly life. The world is the penultimate which under the reign of Christ is directed towards the ultimate, towards man's justification and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Christ is the mediator between the ultimate and the penultimate, between God and the world. God is thus the ultimate reality revealed in Jesus Christ. Consequently Bonhoeffer believes that there is only one reality, the reality of Christ which makes it possible for the world to be the world. The Christian thus belongs wholly to Christ while at the same time he belongs wholly to the world.

The oneness of reality, of God and the world, thus proves Bonhoeffer's claim that spiritual and social life are essentially connected. The notion of vicarious action, therefore, pertains not only to the relationship between the individual Christian and the church as community and as a collective person, but it also pertains, modified as Bonhoeffer's notion of the responsible life, to the Christian as a member of society in worldly life.

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 107.

Vicarious action and the notion of the oneness of all reality are the two outstanding features of Bonhoeffer's Christology which constitute essential elements of the foundation of his social philosophy and thereby strongly determine its actual formulation.

Ecclesiology

Bonhoeffer also attempts to show the unity of spiritual and social life by expounding the central theme of his ecclesiological writings, namely, the concreteness of the revelation.

The church, Bonhoeffer asserts, is a historical community established by God. The present summary, however, is not concerned with the essential church, the sanctorum communio, but with Bonhoeffer's view of the empirical church.

From the view point of social philosophy two aspects in Bonhoeffer's ecclesiological writings are of importance. First, his view of the Christian as individual person and of the church, as a community of persons and as collective person; secondly, his notion of the orders of preservation.

The Church

According to Bonhoeffer, the basis of the church--essential and empirical--is the Christian concept of the person and the notion of basic social relations. Only these concepts provide the norms for all empirical sociality, including the church. The individual person is the ultimate unity. But the individual person depends on the existence of the other man. In other words, the person is real only in sociality. Bonhoeffer describes this relation as the I-Thou relation which derives from the absolute distinction between God and man. The I-Thou relation is thus the basis on which the community is built.

The original community of love between God and man was destroyed in the Fall. Christ reestablished the community of love as the new mankind, the church, which supersedes, individually and collectively, the old mankind of Adam. The community of love is thus the basis of the church as a community of persons and as a collective person. Consequently Bonhoeffer believes that communion with God and all I-Thou relations are possible only in the church.

The Church in the World

The empirical church is a witnessing community in the world. The church proclaims the concreteness of the revelation by taking an active part in the affairs of everyday life. The church must speak and act, Bonhoeffer insists, from a concrete knowledge of the reality of the world. The church's authority to speak and act derives from the gospel and the commandments; its thought and action are oriented towards Christ and thus united.

God preserved the fallen world for Christ and the new creation by means of orders of preservation. These orders of preservation apply to all men. Consequently Bonhoeffer argues not only for the brotherhood of all Christians, but also for the unity of all churches in one universal church, transgressing all boundaries, whether national, political, social or racial.

In Bonhoeffer's view the disunity among Christians is due to the churches obscuring the true message of Christ. Christian and worldly life have become indistinguishable. The ever-growing secularization of the Christian life and of the church, Bonhoeffer contends, can be arrested only by a life of faith and discipleship. The Bible alone is the foundation of a Christian life of faith. Only the individual Christian's obedience to the call of Christ can restore the church as a community of persons and as a collective person and thus enable it to fulfill its task to prove in words and actions the concreteness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ in the world.

Bonhoeffer's later ecclesiological writings emphasize the this-worldliness of the church, though he still maintains the distinction between Christian and worldly life. Christ is the Redeemer of all men, but the redemption of mankind is recognized and proclaimed only in the church. The church, therefore, stands vicariously for mankind. The world is completely the world of Christ; it is not divided into a divine and a secular sphere, but it is one reality under the reign of Christ.

The unity of spiritual and social life, the foundation of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy, has been shown in Bonhoeffer's ecclesiological writings in two ways. First, by his interpretation of the Christian concept of the person and that of basic social relations, then by his notion of the concreteness of the revelation in the form of the orders of preservation, which, as the theory of mandates, become the core of his social philosophy.

The notions of vicarious action and of the oneness of all reality, the essential features of Bonhoeffer's Christocentrism, are elaborated in his ecclesiological writings and combined in the concept of the concreteness of the revelation. The concreteness of revelation or Christianity in the western world is the central theme of Bonhoeffer's historical writings.

History

Bonhoeffer is concerned with the manifestation of the form (Gestalt) of Christ throughout history. Bonhoeffer's expressions "taking form" or "formation" (Gestaltung) have a threefold meaning. First, it means that Christ shapes individual men in conformity with himself. Second, it means that Christ takes form in a section of humanity, the church, which as the Body of Christ stands vicariously for all men. Third, it means the formation of the world to its true form, the form of Jesus Christ, through the church. Christ thus affirms the oneness of all reality. He is the center of all reality and thus the center of history. "The figure of the Reconciler, of the God-man Jesus Christ," Bonhoeffer states,"comes between God and the world and fills the centre of all history."[1]

For the sake of clarity the following summary of Bonhoeffer's evaluation of history is divided into three parts: the christological foundation, the highlights of history, and Bonhoeffer's evaluation.

The Christological Foundation of History

In the Christian view history extends from God to God, from Creation to Eschaton. However, the Christian interpretation of history recognizes the essential distinction between pre-history or the primal state(Urstand) and the Fall, the beginning of human history. History from the Fall to the first coming of Christ is the time of promise and expectation and fulfillment. The central event in the history of mankind is God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Rejected by the world, Christ took form in the church. Man in the fallen world now lives in expectation of the second coming of Christ to take form in all men. History in the Christian view is a history of salvation, of man's redemption and justification. Since Christ and the Word is present only in the church, the church is in Bonhoeffer's view the hidden center of world history and of the state which makes history.

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[1] Ethics, p. 70.

The Christian West

History is either a movement of convergence or divergence in relation to its center Jesus Christ. The choice of "Inheritance and Decay" as the title of his historical essay clearly reveals Bonhoeffer's own judgment concerning the movement of history in the last two centuries. The western world, which through Jesus Christ and the inheritance of Israel and classical antiquity became a historical unit, is defecting from Christ and therefore rapidly decaying. Bonhoeffer describes man's defection from God and from Christ as the secularization of the Christian west. The Reformation and the French Revolution are the two outstanding events in the history of the western world which in Bonhoeffer's opinion are mainly responsible for this phenomenon.

The secularization of the western world began with the Reformation. The Reformation destroyed the unity of the corpus christianum (Christendom), i.e., church and world united in one faith, by means of its doctrines of the two kingdoms and of the priesthood of all believers, The doctrine of the two kingdoms established the separation of church and state, while the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers proclaimed the freedom of the Christian man. By emphasizing the freedom of the individual as an autonomous and thus responsible person the Reformation overthrew the feudalistic order which had prevailed throughout the Middle Ages and so initiated the secularization of the western world.

In the following centuries the clash between reason and faith in man's quest for autonomy, for spiritual, intellectual and bodily freedom, found violent expression in the French Revolution. With the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the General Will man freed himself from the tutelage of church and state. The emancipation of reason and the autonomy of man resulted in a rapid growth of science and technology, the emergence of nationalism and what Bonhoeffer calls the dark menace of the masses.

Evaluation

Bonhoeffer's assessment of the history of man's struggle for autonomy is in general negative. The secularization of the world, following in the wake of the Reformation, is in Bonhoeffer's view the consequence of the misinterpretation of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms. Luther envisioned a true unity of church and state, both serving Christ. Moreover, Luther strove for the freedom of the individual and a genuine social order as willed by God's orders in the world. The division of reality into a divine and a secular sphere resulted later in the French Revolution's proclamation of man's liberation as an absolute ideal and man's apostasy from God which, in Bonhoeffer's view, must end with man's self-destruction.

The rejection of biblical faith in God, of established order and of traditional values can be arrested only, Bonhoeffer claims, by a reawakening of faith and by the force of order. The church has failed in its task to be a witness to Christ's dominion over the world and thus to the concreteness of the revelation. Only a confession of guilt can justify and renew the church and thus the western world. The return to the unity of the Middle Ages and its renewal as it was intended by the Reformation together with the church's concern for the future can prevent the complete disintegration of the Christian west. In spite of this generally negative verdict, Bonhoeffer praises the Enlightenment for stressing and supporting man's claim to dignity as an autonomous and thus responsible individual in society.

Bonhoeffer's interpretation of history, as seen from the perspective of social philosophy, is concerned exclusively with man's autonomy and the secularization of the world. With the emancipation of reason the individual asserted his autonomy as a free and responsible being invested with inalienable rights and thus personal dignity. The relation between the individual and the collective person, the church as well as the state, was based on the freedom of man. The existence of the state rested on the will of the nation, on contractual agreement and the separation of church and state.

Bonhoeffer's acknowledgment of the autonomy of the individual and the collective person, the state, in a world defecting from Christ is the essential contribution of his historical writings to the foundation of his social philosophy. The autonomy of the individual and the collective person is later elaborated by Bonhoeffer in the heteronomy and autonomy of the mandates.

To conclude: Bonhoeffer's claim that spiritual and social life are essentially connected has been regarded as constituting the foundation of his social philosophy. Bonhoeffer's quest for the presence of Christ in the world, the pervading theme of his christological, ecclesiological and historical writings, attempts to show that man is both a spiritual and a social being. Christ's vicarious action for all mankind established the oneness of all reality. Christ is the mediator between the reality of God and the reality of the world and thus the center of all reality. Christ is present in the church which proclaims the reign of Christ over the world and thus witnesses to the concreteness of revelation. Though Bonhoeffer maintains the individuality and autonomy of the person as the ultimate unit and as a responsible being, he nevertheless insists that the person is real only in sociality. Spiritual and social life are thus essentially connected, not only through the vicarious action of the Christian as individual person, as member of the church, as member of society, but also through the vicarious action of the church as a community of persons and as a collective person in the world. Christ's presence in the world, i.e., the concreteness of the revelation, derived from the notions of vicarious action and of the oneness of all reality, therefore, determines the Christian life in the world.

Bonhoeffer's Social Philosophy

Bonhoeffer's social philosophy proper is the subject matter of the second theme. Its starting point is Bonhoeffer's view of the individual person, of community and of society in the primal state in order to substantiate his claim that sociality has its origins (*Ursprünge*) in man's spiritual life and thus to determine the original and essential nature of sociality. Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the primal state is followed by his interpretation of the individual per se, his rights and duties. Man as a social being and the orders of social life, the mandates, form the concluding portion of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy.

The Doctrine of the Primal State

Bonhoeffer rests his doctrine of the primal state on the general proposition that the person is real only in sociality. As has been pointed out, Bonhoeffer derives the Christian concept of the person and that of basic social relation, the I-Thou relation, from the absolute distinction between God and man. The I as person comes into existence, ontically as well as ethically, only through the "other" as Thou, i.e., as God and other men. The self-knowledge of the moral person arises from the experience of the ethical barrier between God and himself and other men. Consequently Bonhoeffer maintains that the origins of sociality are to be found in man's spiritual life.

Bonhoeffer elaborates this claim by discussing the pure manifestations of human spirituality and sociality as they existed in the primal state, in the original community of God and man before the Fall, from the vantage points of theology, social philosophy and sociology.

Theology views the original community as a community of mutual love, which, individually and collectively, is in immediate communion with God. Divine and human community belong together. Man's sociality is thus based on man's creation as a free spiritual being directly related to God.

Social philosophy regards man's self-consciousness and self-determination, forming the structural unity of the person, as the basis of man's sociality. As a social being the person is structurally open to sociality, while he is structurally closed as an individual. Though the person remains always the ultimate unit, it is only through interactions with others that the I comes into being. Consequently, Bonhoeffer argues, there is no priority of either personal or social being.

From this basis Bonhoeffer develops the concept of the collective person, having the same structure as the individual person. The collective person is a concrete unity and thus the center of acts of the individual persons constituting it. The collective person, therefore, must be regarded as an individual person.

The pure form of social community existing in the primal state is constituted by reciprocal will. From a sociological point of view Bonhoeffer distinguishes between community and society. Community, willed by God, is a social structure as an end in itself, while society, willed by men, is a social structure as a means to an end. Community, Bonhoeffer declares, extends from God to God, society is within history.

Bonhoeffer also classifies social structures according to their distribution of power as exemplified by the rule of absolute power, or by power based on genuine authority, or by the balance of power as in the cooperative. In Bonhoeffer's opinion, the mass, the simplest social structure, absorbs the individuality of the person and thus does not belong to the types mentioned.

A social community as a community of will possesses an objective spirit which arises as a new, separate and independent social spirit. Through it, the community is experienced by its members as something real outside and beyond themselves. Though objective spirit arises in community as well as in society, it is only the objective spirit of the community which has personal, that is, moral character. The community as collective person interacts with its members and with other communities as collective persons through its objective spirit.

Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the primal state established that man's spirituality and sociality rest in one another. With the Fall the original community was destroyed. While the natural or social form of the original community remained unchanged, the spiritual form, the community of love, changed to egoism. Egoism thus became the new spiritual basis of empirical communities in history. Ethical isolation and ethical solidarity, derived from individual and universal sin, characterize the existence of man in the fallen world.

The Person

The ethical community, Bonhoeffer declares, is built on integrated persons. Bonhoeffer characterizes the integrated person as a man who knows himself and who acts as an inner unity. But man's self-understanding, Bonhoeffer maintains, cannot derive from his potentialities or from his achievements. Man can understand himself only with reference to God and community. In other words, man understands himself and becomes man only through Jesus Christ who exists as community, the church.

Man, therefore, must reconcile his awareness of being a homo socialis with his basic right to live, his right to self-assertion. Bonhoeffer points to Christ's death for mankind and asserts that only the freedom to self-sacrifice gives man the right to live, makes him truly free for life. The integrated person recognizes that life is not centered upon himself, but that it is one of responsibility for others. Freedom and responsibility thus determine thought and action of the integrated person.

The individual acts in the freedom of his personal responsibility as a member of humanity and as a Christian. Through Christ, man's life is bound to men and to God. But man is also free on account of his creation as a free spiritual being. Bonhoeffer distinguishes between man's original freedom as God's creature, man's relative freedom in natural life after the Fall and, finally, man's absolute freedom which he receives in his reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ.

Man's original freedom stems from his creation in God's image, but his freedom is limited by his creatureliness (Geschöpflichkeit). With the Fall the direct dependence of the creature on God is replaced by the relative freedom of natural life.

In the fallen but preserved world man is still man and therefore free. The relative freedom of natural life consists in man's autonomy to use or abuse his freedom. The right use of freedom directs man towards that which is in accordance with life, the natural, the good; the abuse of freedom results in the destruction of the natural. Man's conscience is the criterion by which he decides his actions. Bonhoeffer distinguishes the "natural conscience" of fallen man, i.e., man's awareness of his lost unity and his means of self-justification before God, from the "liberated conscience" of the Christian. For the Christian, Jesus Christ as the ultimate unity of conscience and responsibility is the final and absolute criterion for his actions in the world.

Man's relative freedom in natural life is overcome and absolute freedom is attained by God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Through Christ the natural becomes the penultimate directed towards the ultimate, man's justification before God. Though bound to natural life, the Christian shares in the new life, the life of Christ, and thus in absolute freedom. Autonomous man in natural life lives under the guidance of his natural conscience without Christ in partial response to certain principles. The Christian, however, lives under the guidance of his liberated conscience with Christ in total response to the Word of God and is therefore free for total responsibility to God and men. Man's relation to Christ alone determines his relative or absolute freedom.

Responsible life in the penultimate is characterized by deputyship or vicarious action and by correspondence with reality. Since Christ lived in deputyship for all mankind, all human life is life in deputyship. Deputyship and responsibility, Bonhoeffer declares, is the complete surrender of one's own life to the other man. Correspondence with reality is action which is in accordance with Christ. Since man is limited by his creatureliness, he must leave the final judgment concerning his actions to God. God and men, then, are the origin and the limit of man's responsible life.

The integrated person is not only an individual but also a social being. Consequently the existence of man must be ordered by rights and duties.

Rights and Duties

Natural rights protect man's existence as an individual in society. Bonhoeffer believes that these rights, the highest attainment of human reason, found their most comprehensive expression in the Roman law principle of suum cuique (to each his own). From the Christian viewpoint, however, the limitations of man's reason caused the principle of suum cuique not to recognize the conflicts inherent in natural life. The conflicts of natural rights derive from man's sinful nature. God created man and preserved him in natural life after the Fall. Consequently, natural rights, the means to protect man's existence in natural life, derive from God. God, the Creator of man, is thus the guarantor of man's natural rights.

Though Bonhoeffer intended to discuss the problem of natural rights as it pertains to the whole man, he could consider only a number of problems relating to man's natural right to bodily life. The quintessence of Bonhoeffer's view of man's natural rights is his assertion that the right to life is the foundation of all natural rights.

Natural rights safeguard the existence of the individual only when they are universally acknowledged and respected. Natural rights, therefore, imply duties. In order to make social life possible it is the duty of man to acknowledge and respect the rights of others.

Bonhoeffer, looking at the problem of duty from a Christian perspective, asserts that man's claim to moral autonomy cannot be maintained. Not reson, but man's total response to Jesus Christ determines his duties in the world. The total claim of Jesus Christ as the center of all reality requires the total response of the Christian _in_ the world. The supreme duty of the Christian is his _vocation_ (_Berufung_), that is, his obedience to the call of Christ, to a responsible life serving God and men. _Vocation_ is responsibility. Man lives in the world, but he belongs to God; man is free for God and free from the world. Bonhoeffer, following Luther, believes that the limited responsibility of man's vocation (_Beruf_) must be linked with his unlimited responsibility towards Christ. Christ frees man from the conflict of duties encountered in the world and thus enables man to act responsibly in the world beyond the limits of his specific calling.

The concept of _vocation_ also includes man's duty to love his neighbor. Love, the central notion of Christian ethics, alone gives moral value to the Christian concept of duty. Furthermore, the concept of _vocation_, Bonhoeffer contends, gives man the freedom to break the law of God. Accepting his personal responsibility and his guilt, man truly hallows the law. The supreme duty of the Christian to answer the call of Christ and to live responsibly in the world thus includes, surpasses, and therefore determines all other duties of man.

Bonhoeffer contrasts the Christian with the ethical concept of duty in general. Man's experience of the "ought" (Sollen), the ethical phenomenon, is for Bonhoeffer a Grenzereignis, an event at the border of man's existence. It is restricted to those situations in which the order of life is threatened. The "ought" in its permanent form is man's awareness of his own limitations; in its acute form it is the initiator of moral deliberation and corrective action. In Bonhoeffer's view the essential task of an ethics is to help people to learn to share in life within the bounds of the "ought."

The "ought" in specific situations implies the relation between superiority and inferiority, that is, between moral authority and obedience. Superiority derives its legitimation from a concrete objective commission. Only the responsibility invested in man's station in life bestows upon him the authority of the moral command. Without a clearly established order in society, Bonhoeffer claims, the ethical becomes meaningless. While the ethical establishes limits within which life must be lived, the commandment of God, the basis of the Christian concept of duty, encompasses the whole of life. The "ought" confronts man with a multiplicity of duties; the commandment of God frees man from the uncertainties of ethical decisions so that he shares fully in life. The ethical as the criterion for man's action in the God-given orders of life is valid and therefore justified only when it is based on its origin, the commandment of God, the ultimate basis of moral authority.

The Mandates

The concrete forms of God's commandment in the world are the divine mandates. They are manifested in the earthly institutions of marriage and family, labor, government and the church.

In his earlier writings Bonhoeffer describes the structures of life in the world as God's ordinances or orders of preservation. He rejects the notion of order of creation. It permits the defense of any order as God-willed order and, more important, it fails to express that the created world is also the world of sin. Sin conceals the original orders of creation and thus man's direct apprehension of God's will. The commandment and thus the orders in the fallen world stem only from Christ who established the new world of the new order of God. Consequently the orders of the fallen world are orders of preservation directed towards Christ, the new creation. Any order can and must be dissolved, Bonhoeffer insists, when it no longer permits the proclamation of the revelation.

A mandate is according to Bonhoeffer's definition a concrete divine commission. The concreteness of the mandate as a divine commission as well as the formation of a definite earthly domain require the conferment of authority to an earthly agent who acts as deputy. While the relation within a mandate is one of superiority or moral authority and inferiority or obedience, the relation among the mandates is one of mutual cooperation and limitation. The autonomy and heteronomy of the mandates has as its common basis God's love for men and the world as revealed in Jesus Christ. The proclamation of God's commandments is therefore not entrusted to one single mandate but to all mandates alike.

Marriage and Family

The first and oldest among the structures of life is the institution of marriage and family. Marriage and family came into being with the creation of the world. In marriage man shares in God's power of creation. Genesis, the biblical account of the divine origin of marriage and family, however, stresses the oneness of man and woman, not procreation. Man and woman belong together inspite of and on account of their individuality. In Bonhoeffer's view the community in marriage is identical with the community of love, the church.

After the Fall the original unity of love in marriage is replaced by the self-affirmation of man and woman. Sexuality is the expression of man's self-assertion, restrained only by a sense of shame as the recognition of the limit set by God and the other person. The consequence of the Christian belief that man's sexuality constitutes the essence of original sin is a strong emphasis on chastity and self-control in married life. Marriage is undertaken in the Lord and therefore insoluble except by death.

Concerning the relation of the mandate of marriage and family to church and state Bonhoeffer claims that marriage must be based on the free choice of the partners. Consequently neither the church nor the state have any rights to determine the choice of a mate. The state regulates marriage by laws only to protect the welfare of the community. The state, therefore, is nothing but a witness and the guarantor of the marriage concluded by two individuals. In Bonhoeffer's opinion the church in general has failed to protect the integrity of marriage and family as the foundation of society. The result was the collapse of parental authority, the disintegration of family life and thus the deterioration of the moral fiber of society.

For man and woman to become one in the sight of God and to educate their children to obedience to Christ is the divine commission of the mandate of marriage and family.

Labor

Together with marriage and family the institution of labor came into being as part of God's creation. In labor man participates in the act of creation; Adam is to dress and keep the garden of Eden. After the Fall man must till the soil in the sweat of his brow to procure his nourishment. Though man must support himself by his own labor, he must also exercise charity to help those who are in need. However, the Christian knows that it is not his own work but God's blessings which sustain him. Consequently the Christian's labor in the world is not directed towards the accumulation of material wealth, but it is concerned only with the provision for his daily needs.

The teaching of the church concerning man's labor was modified in later centuries and the contract as the legal basis for man's dealing with one another was accepted and not considered evil as such. A contract is evil only when it serves man's self-interests as a means of exploitation. But man's acquisitive nature caused the majority of men to ignore the teaching of the church. The result was the exploitation of the working-class in industrial societies, the alienation of the worker from his work and also from the Christian religion as represented by the church. Bonhoeffer again castigates the church for its failure to properly understand the conditions of the working people. The church, Bonhoeffer insists, must actively participate in finding solutions to the problems in modern industrial society.

Concerning the divine mandate of labor Bonhoeffer points out that labor in itself is not a divine institution, it is divine only in relation to Christ. The limited responsibility of man's labor, his vocation, must be subordinated to his unlimited responsibility towards Christ, his vocation. Responsibility, the key notion of the Christian life, also characterizes the mandate of labor.

Government

Christian life is part of social life and social life is possible only through the creation of law and order. A community in which life is ordered and safeguarded by a governing authority is a state. Bonhoeffer's views concerning state and government are determined by two sources, the Scripture and Luther's notion of Obrigkeit.

Bonhoeffer maintains that state and government do not derive from society but from God. Concerning the state Bonhoeffer asserts that the state (Staat) in its origin as the pure form of social community in the primal state (Urstand) is good, but the state as an ordered empirical community in history is sinful. In contrast to the historical state, government as Obrigkeit (the powers that be) is always a divine commission. "Government," Bonhoeffer declares, "is order in the world, an order which bears the authority of God. Government is not itself of the world, but of God."[1]

The New Testament's strong emphasis on the Christians obedience to government as divinely ordained authority underwent considerable change in Christian thought with the division of reality into a divine and a secular sphere. The state was considered to be the servant of the church, the superstructure of all worldly life. It was Luther who asserted that Obrigkeit and the church both serve only one master, Jesus Christ. From Luther's view of Obrigkeit Bonhoeffer develops his own theory of the divine mandate of government.

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[1] Ethics, p. 336.

While Luther based his doctrine of state and government primarily on the Decalogue, Bonhoeffer's view of the mandate of government derives from the gospel and his christocentric interpretation of history. Christ fulfilled the history of mankind and thus reunited man with God. Christ is present in history not only in the church but also in the state. Only from Christ derives the state its justification as creator of order in the world.

The preservation of what has been created in that order which was willed by God is the essential task of the government. By establishing and maintaining law and order the government makes social life possible. Though government is exercised in history by fallible men, it will never be deprived of its divine dignity, since its existence is based on Christ whose death reconciled government with God. The very existence of government as a divinely ordained authority requires the carrying out of its divine commission. The ultimate purpose of government is the service of Christ. Consequently, on account of its divine commission government is justified in its claim to obedience. However, the relation between government and the other mandates is of a regulative nature and determined by the welfare of the community as a whole. If the government fails in its task the Christian must take upon himself the personal responsibility to disobey and to act according to the maxim: One should rather obey God than men. Obedience to God's commandment is the final and absolute criterion determining the Christian's actions as a citizen of the state.

Church

The divine mandate of marriage and family, of labor and of government are given by God to all mankind. The divine mandate of the church, however, is a specifically Christian mandate, namely, the proclamation of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. The mandate of the church, therefore, extends to all mandates. It is concerned not only with man as an individual and social being, but primarily with man as a spiritual being, as a Christian, living in the midst of the world.

The foundation of the Christian life in faith is the Bible. The proclamation of the concreteness of the revelation that Christ as the mediator between God and the world is the center of all reality is the divine mandate of the church. Since Christ is present in all mandates, the church is one mandate among others, fulfilling its specific task to make real the reality of Christ in the world.

Christ becomes real first in the church, Bonhoeffer asserts. The mandate of the church is twofold. First, the mandate concerns the preaching and the organization of the church as the place where Christ is present. Second, it concerns the church's relation to the world, the Christian life in the world.

In the church one must distinguish, Bonhoeffer points out, between the spiritual office or ministry and the congregation of the Christians. The office of the proclamation is a task bestowed upon the ministry by God; the sermon or the public preaching belongs to the congregation. In Bonhoeffer's view the distinction between superiority and inferiority in the church is the divinely ordained relationship between the spiritual office and the congregation. Furthermore, the church's own purpose includes church discipline which with the preaching truly makes the church the place where Christ is present.

Incarnation, Cross and Resurrection determine the Christian life of the congregation in the world. The Incarnation shows that God exists for men, the Cross signifies the world's rejection of and reconciliation with God, while the Resurrection means the end of the old and the beginning of the new world. The congregation, then, is the mediator between the divine mandate of the church, the proclamation, and the world. The church as ministry and congregation stands vicariously for mankind, affirming in faith God's reconciliation with the world in Christ.

The church's word to the world is the Word of God. But that does not mean, Bonhoeffer argues, that the church can provide solutions to all the problems of the world. The church cannot establish a worldly concrete order, but it must oppose any order which obstructs belief in Christ. While the task of the spiritual office is to pass judgment on the secular institutions of the world, it is the task of the congregation to carry out the demands of the spiritual office.

The most important among the secular institutions is the government. Consequently, the relation between government and church is of specific significance. In general, the church as ministry and congregation demands the government's religious neutrality, the protection of the freedom of worship and of a peaceful Christian life. However, the relation between the spiritual office as such and the government is distinct from that of the congregation and government. The spiritual office is completely independent of government. Nevertheless, the spiritual office has a political responsibility. Whenever deficiencies in the general conditions of life occur in the state, the spiritual office must address the government and request it to rectify those conditions. In contrast to the spiritual office the individual member of the congregation is not responsible for the actions of government. Though the individual Christian is responsible only for his own life, he owes obedience to the government as a citizen.

Church and government have separate tasks, but their ultimate purpose is the same, namely, the service of Christ. Only the autonomy and the heteronomy of the mandates make possible a responsible Christian life in the world.

In the following and concluding part Bonhoeffer's social philosophy will be critically examined from the perspective of his prison letters in order to determine its relevance or irrelevance for contemporary man and society.

PART III

EVALUATION

CHAPTER XIV

THE LETTERS FROM PRISON

Introduction

Bonhoeffer's investigation into the original and essential nature of sociality, the task which he ascribes to social philosophy as a normative science, establishes the interdependence of personal and social being, derived from God's relation to man, as the basis of social life. Organic pluralism may thus be regarded as a fitting description of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy. It is pluralistic because Bonhoeffer considers the individual person as ultimate unit, it is organic since the individual person becomes real only in sociality, i.e., in social wholes or collective persons. The highest expression of organic pluralism is the concept of mankind, the collective human person. It is the Christian interpretation of the history of mankind, seen from God's revelation in Jesus Christ, its central event, which determines and characterizes Bonhoeffer's view of social life. Social life is thus exclusively oriented towards Jesus Christ as its _summum bonum_ and absolute criterion.

Social life is ordered by mandates. In contrast to Luther's doctrine of ordinances which, based on his notion of orders of creation, established a static, hierarchical and therefore absolutely valid order of social life, Bonhoeffer's theory of mandates may be regarded as a functional order. The essential and distinguishing features of Bonhoeffer's view of social order are his notions of Christonomy and of the autonomy and heteronomy of the mandates.

The mandates, ordering social life as divine commissions, have validity only in relation to Christ. Their sole function is to serve Christ. Consequently, any order or structure of life which fails to serve Christ ceases to be valid and thus can and must be dissolved. Furthermore, though each mandate is autonomous, the reign of Christ over each mandate, or Christonomy, establishes the heteronomy of all mandates. Responsibility, the essence of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy as organic pluralism, thus determines the actions of the individual and the collective person in the world.

The presentation of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy has been based on those scattered and fragmentary references in his writings which precede his challenging letters from prison. These earlier writings reflect Bonhoeffer's development from a conservative Lutheran theologian in his youth to an open-minded and realistic Christian who tries to reconcile the actuality of autonomous man in a secular world with his spiritual and intellectual heritage. Bonhoeffer's social philosophy also mirrors this development and may be considered as an attempt to transfer the christocentric interpretation of the nature and reality of the church as a community of persons and as a collective person into the world. The Lordship of Christ in the church becomes the *regnum Christi* over the world in Bonhoeffer's social philosophy.

The basic question which now must be asked is: do Bonhoeffer's prison letters invalidate his social philosophy?

In order to answer this question Bonhoeffer's key letters expressing his most important ideas concerning the place and function of Christianity and the church in the secular world will be presented. Then the effect of these key letters on Bonhoeffer's social philosophy will be examined.

The Letters from Prison

Theologian. Christian. Contemporary. Eberhard Bethge uses these three words in his recently published biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer to describe the main stages of Bonhoeffer's development. It is as a theologian by training, as a Christian who fought for his church, and as a contemporary in a Nazi prison that Bonhoeffer was eminently qualified to exercise his judgment concerning Christianity and the church during his time.

In general, Bonhoeffer's letters from prison may be regarded as a re-examination of his earlier assessment of the history of the Christian west. In his *Ethics* Bonhoeffer considered the secularization of the western world as an apostasy from Christ. This rather pessimistic evaluation of the growing autonomy of the world rests mainly on Bonhoeffer's criticism of the results brought about by the proclamation of reason as an absolute ideal. This view of the historical situation is shared by many others as Bonhoeffer points out with reference to the efforts of Christian apologetics to oppose this process of secularization. "Catholic and Protestant historians are agreed," Bonhoeffer writes, "that it is in this development that the great defection from God, from Christ, is to be discerned."[1] But in his earlier historical essay Bonhoeffer also pointed out some positive aspects within the process of secularization.

It may be recalled that Bonhoeffer used the term "coming of age" already in his description of man's reaction against absolutism following the French Revolution. Furthermore, Bonhoeffer spoke of the two forms of godlessness in the western world, one hidden under the cloak of religion, the other as a protest against Christianity and the church. Concerning the latter, Bonhoeffer wrote:

> It is the protest against pious godlessness in so far as this has corrupted the Churches, and thus in a certain sense, if only negatively, it defends the heritage of a genuine faith in God and of a genuine Church.[2]

In his prison letters Bonhoeffer honestly accepts the world as it is, a world which no longer needs the God of traditional Christianity. "The only way to be honest,"

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[1] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 195.

[2] Ethics, p. 103.

Bonhoeffer asserts, "is to recognize that we have to live in the world *etsi deus non daretur*."[1] While Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran theologian and Christian, deplored the emancipation of reason and the growing autonomy of man and the world as the secularization of Christianity, Bonhoeffer, the contemporary, now describes this historical phenomenon as the coming of age of the world.

What, in Bonhoeffer's opinion, characterizes the newly matured world? This question is best answered by a brief review of Bonhoeffer's account of the historical development which culminates in what he calls a "world come of age."

The World Coming of Age

The movement towards man's autonomy began around the thirteenth century and entails all of man's activities. The emancipation of man from the guidance of church and state is evident in "the discovery of the laws by which the world lives and manages in science, social and political affairs, art, ethics and religion."[2] Bonhoeffer gives only a very brief outline of this struggle for freedom of thought.

The emancipation of reason begins in theology with Lord Herbert of Cherbury and in ethics with Montaigne and Bodin. In politics Bonhoeffer mentions Machiavelli and Grotius. In the field of philosophy he acknowledges the contributions of Descartes and Spinoza, and in the natural sciences those of Nicolas of Cusa and Giordano Bruno. "All along the line," Bonhoeffer notes, "there is a growing tendency to assert the autonomy of man and the world."[1]

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[1] *Letters and Papers from Prison*, p. 219.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

This growing autonomy of man and the world receives a great impetus through the Reformation and the French Revolution as Bonhoeffer pointed out in his Ethics. The rapid development of science and technology after the French Revolution resulted in an accelerated emancipation of man and the world and also in man's alienation from Christianity and the church. "The world which has attained to a realization of itself and of the laws which govern its existence is so sure of itself that we become frightened,"[2] Bonhoeffer concedes. Now man has grown up, he has come of age. What does Bonhoeffer mean by the phrase "coming of age?"

Coming of age denotes for Bonhoeffer that the time of man's childhood and adolescence in which he was under the tutelage of church and state belongs to the past. Man has learnt to accept personal responsibility in determining his own destiny. E. Bethge comments on the notion "world come of age":

> The main notion for Bonhoeffer is responsibility, the irreversible capacity and duty of adults individually to answer the questions of life in their own particu-

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[1] Ibid., p. 218. [2] Ibid., p. 195.

lar fields and within their autonomous structures.[1]

The outstanding feature of the world which has come of age is its alienation from traditional Christianity and its conception of God. Bonhoeffer observes: "Man has learned to cope with all questions of importance without recourse to God as a working hypothesis."[2] The autonomy of man and the world means that the time of religion as it has been understood generally throughout the existence of Christianity has passed or, as Bonhoeffer admits, "that the linchpin is removed from the whole structure of our Christianity to date."[3] Religious or traditional Christianity has become a relic, a form without content conveying no meaning and consequently ignored by most men. Why, in Bonhoeffer's opinion, did Christianity fail?

The Failure of Christianity

Bonhoeffer believes that the religious interpretation of Christianity is the reason for its failure to be meaningful for modern man who lives here and now in this world. "It is not with the next world that we are concerned," Bonhoeffer points out, "but with this world as created and preserved and set subject to laws and atoned for and made new."[1] Consequently a religious interpretation either in terms of metaphysical conceptualization, i.e., thinking in two realms, or in terms of an individualistic concern for salvation is irrelevant for modern man. In addition, Bonhoeffer blames the misuse of God as a problem-solver, a _Deus_ _ex_ _machina_, or as a stop-gap in the case of human failure for the present predicament of Christianity. Furthermore, the religious interpretation of Christianity brought forth a privileged class which considered itself to be the guardian of the outsiders. Christianity's preference for and adherence to certain social groups is evident, as Bethge maintains, in the "patronizing, feudalistic character of Christian institutions and creeds."[2]

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[1] E. Bethge, "Bonhoeffer's Christology and His 'Religionless Christianity'," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXIII (Fall 1967), p. 68.

[2] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 195.

[3] Ibid., p. 163.

All these factors are, in Bonhoeffer's opinion, responsible for the decline of traditional Christianity. That Christianity survived for nineteen hundred years Bonhoeffer attributes to the "religious premise" of man. But this a priori premise must now be regarded as nothing but "an historical and temporary form of human self-expression."[3] Bonhoeffer, therefore, concludes:

> The time when men could be told everything by means of words, whether theological or simply pious, is

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 168.

[2] Bethge, "Bonhoeffer's Christology and His 'Religionless Christianity'," p. 67.

[3] _Letters and Papers from Prison_, pp. 162-63.

> over, and so is the time of inwardness and conscience, which is to say the time of religion as such.[1]

The cardinal mistake of Christianity, represented as organized religion in the church, was and is the attempt to keep man in a state of absolute dependence upon a transcendent God. The more the church tries to curtail the emancipation of man and the world from its guardianship, the stronger grows the opposition towards the church.

The key issue for the church today is the Pauline question. "Freedom from circumcision, is," in Bonhoeffer's view, "at the same time freedom from religion."[2] It is from this perspective that Bonhoeffer scornfully regards the efforts of Christian apologetics to retain the world come of age for the church, after the *modus vivendi*, which liberal theology had achieved for the church in the controversy between church and world, had ceased to exist. The self-assurance of man and the world must not and cannot be reversed into a state of immaturity by the church's reliance upon so-called ultimate questions or the exploitations of human weaknesses. "When Jesus blessed sinners," Bonhoeffer remarks, "they were real sinners, but Jesus did not make every man a sinner first. He called them out of their sin, not into their sin."[3]

The attempt of Christian polemics and apologetics, which Bonhoeffer calls pointless, ignoble, and un-Christian, to convince the average man of his misery in order to prove to him that he cannot live without God, is absolutely meaningless. Consequently Bonhoeffer demands "that we should give up all our clerical subterfuges"[1] and accept the fact that the world has come of age. This demand includes the rejection of Bonhoeffer's own suggestion, stated in his Ethics, to see in the church the guardian of the heritage of the Middle Ages. This solution, Bonhoeffer writes from his prison cell, "is a counsel of despair, which can be purchased only at the cost of intellectual sincerity."[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 162. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 165. [3] *Ibid.*, p.209.

However, Bonhoeffer does not abandon his quest for the presence of Christ vis-à-vis a world which has come of age. Realistically recognizing the central and vital issue confronting Christianity in the world, Bonhoeffer writes: "The question is, Christ and the newly matured world."[3]

Christ and the World Come of Age

Bonhoeffer answers this question by referring back to the central ideas with which he supported his claim for the concreteness of revelation. In Act and Being and in his Christology lectures Bonhoeffer asserted that in Christ God is free and present for men. In Christ, the mediator, the relationship between a transcendent God and dependent man is changed into one of partnership between God and man. Affirming the autonomy of man as God's partner, Bonhoeffer writes:

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[1] Ibid., p. 214. [2] Ibid., p. 219. [3] Ibid., p. 197.

> I should like to speak of God not on the borders of life but at its centre, not in weakness but in strength, not, therefore, in man's suffering and death but in his life and prosperity . . . God is the "beyond" in the midst of our life.[1]

Bonhoeffer's seemingly paradoxical statement that God's descendence is also his transcendence can only be understood in the light of his notions of ethical transcendence and the oneness of all reality and from his account of the Christian life. The ethical transcendence of God and the other person established the I-Thou relation and thus the self-awareness of the I as person. God is thus the "beyond" in the life of man. Furthermore, in Bonhoeffer's view the oneness of reality comprises the ultimate reality of God and the penultimate, the world. As the person is real only in sociality, so God is real only in the world.

However, the world come of age is still the penultimate directed towards the ultimate, the coming of Christ and the justification of man before God. Vicarious action characterizes the responsible life of the Christian in the world, the penultimate. The responsible life presupposes not only freedom of decision within the limits of human knowledge, it includes also the acceptance of guilt, so that "the responsible man commits his actions into the hands of God and lives by God's grace."[2] The world is still the fallen world and man is still fallible man. The Christian, therefore, Bonhoeffer writes from prison, "must drink the earthly cup to the lees, and only in his doing that is the crucified and risen Lord with him, and he crucified and risen with Christ."[1] Bonhoeffer answers the question, who is Christ for us today? by professing "that it is not by omnipotence that Christ helps us, but by his weakness and suffering . . . only a suffering God can help."[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 165-66. [2] *Ethics*, p. 234.

It is precisely from the consideration of the place and function of man's reason with regard to the relation between the ultimate and the penultimate that Bonhoeffer insists on the presence of Christ in the world come of age and asks: "How can we reclaim for Christ a world which has come of age?"[3]

This question reveals that Bonhoeffer is still hopeful of reconciling faith and reason by emphasizing the unity of Christian thought and action in the world. As early as 1932, Bonhoeffer stressed the importance of the church's participation in the affairs of the world. In the Ethics Bonhoeffer expressed the conviction that the rising tide of secularism could be stemmed only by the renewal of the church through atonement and forgiveness. In his letters from prison Bonhoeffer states that the church can assume its place in the world come of age only by proclaiming the Word of God in non-religious or worldly terms. In an outline for a book which Bonhoeffer had planned to write, he describes the future church:

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[1] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 206.

[2] Ibid., p. 220.

> She must take her part in the social life of the world not lording it over men, but helping and serving them. She must tell men, whatever their calling, what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others.[1]

Religionless Christianity in a world come of age is still centered upon Jesus Christ who is no longer the triumphant Lord, but a suffering and humiliated Christ.

Following the presentation of Bonhoeffer's letters from prison, the question raised at the outset may be restated: Do Bonhoeffer's prison letters invalidate his social philosophy?

Bonhoeffer's letters as seen from the perspective of social philosophy contain very little which directly affects his social philosophy proper. However, Bonhoeffer's indictment of traditional Christianity and the church profoundly affects his christological, ecclesiological and historical writings which have been considered the foundation of his social philosophy. Before critically evaluating Bonhoeffer's social philosophy proper its foundation will be examined in the light of his prison letters.

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[1] Ibid., p. 239.

CHAPTER XV

THE LETTERS FROM PRISON AND THE FOUNDATION OF BONHOEFFER'S SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

The basic problem pervading Bonhoeffer's life and thought to overcome the dualism between the reality of God and the reality of the world, his quest for the presence of Christ in the world, is also evident in his letters from prison. As in his earlier writings, Christ and the world is the central theme of Bonhoeffer's letters. The essential difference which distinguishes Bonhoeffer's prison letters from his earlier writings is his new interpretation of Christ and the world.

In his earlier writings Bonhoeffer overcame the dichotomy between a transcendent God and man by the regnum Christi over the world. In his prison letters Bonhoeffer emphasizes Christ's presence in the world as a humiliated mediator whose suffering atoned for the world. While Bonhoeffer described in his earlier essay man's and the world's growing autonomy as an apostasy from Christ, his new evaluation of history ends with the acceptance of a world which has come of age.

Bonhoeffer's new interpretation of Christ and the world has been regarded as a caesura in his development which obliterates completely his earlier views. It will become clear in the following evaluation of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy that the prison letters do not constitute a caesura, but the climax of a development which had its beginning in The Communion of Saints. It will be shown that Bonhoeffer cannot be considered a radical theologian, but must be regarded as a Lutheran theologian and churchman who attempts to renew his church in a world which has come of age by freeing its creed from petrified and outdated tenets. The purpose of the present evaluation is to determine the place and function of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy in this endeavor.

Since Christocentrism has been regarded as the key to Bonhoeffer's thought, the present evaluation begins with answering the question: Is the Christ of the prison letters identical with the Christ of his christological writings?

Christology

The Lutheran doctrine of man's justification by faith alone is the basis of Bonhoeffer's christological writings. Obedience of fallen man to his Redeemer Jesus Christ and the distinction between Christian and worldly life are the two outstanding features characterizing Bonhoeffer's account of the relationship between Christ and man. Man is justified before God only through his faith in Christ who lived and died vicariously for all mankind. Christ as the mediator between God and man is thus the center of human existence. Since man exists in history and nature, Bonhoeffer declares that Christ is also the center of all reality created by God. The reality of the world, the penultimate, is united in Christ with the ultimate reality of God. Christ is therefore the Lord of the world. Consequently, man's relation to God is determined by his relation to Christ. Only man's total commitment to Christ makes a Christian life in the world possible. The world is thus merely a means to man's discipleship. Man's *vocation* or discipleship is his responsibility towards Christ. Though man lives in the world, he truly belongs to God.

Bonhoeffer's Christology thus clearly establishes the relationship of superiority and inferiority, the authority of Christ and the obedience of man, that is, a Christocracy.

One can safely assume that the change from a *theologia gloriae* to a *theologia crucis* in the prison letters was mostly determined by Bonhoeffer's own experiences shortly before and during World War II and specifically by his imprisonment. The shaking of the foundations of his spiritual and intellectual heritage, to use a Tillichian expression, is evident not only in Bonhoeffer's re-examination of the tenets of the Lutheran faith but also in his more personal letters.

In a time when millions suffer innocently under the harshness and cruelty of the war Christianity can only be meaningful by pointing to the vicarious suffering of Christ on the cross for the world. Not Christ and dependent man, but Christ and autonomous man suffer together in the world. Both, Christ and autonomous man accept the cross, the reality of suffering in the world.

Consequently the cross and vicarious action constitute the link which unites Bonhoeffer's christological writings with his prison letters, the triumphant Lord over the world with the suffering and humiliated Lord in the world.

Though man and the world have come of age, Bonhoeffer insists that the world is still the fallen world and man still in need of God's grace through Christ who suffers for and with man. Christ is the man for others.

"Man is challenged," Bonhoeffer asserts, "to participate in the sufferings of God at the hands of a godless world."[1] Not Christocracy, but Christ's com-passion with man characterizes Bonhoeffer's Christology of the prison letters.

Does this change of emphasis in Bonhoeffer's interpretation of Christ also alter his views concerning the church? Again one must ask, is the church of the prison letters identical with the church described in Bonhoeffer's ecclesiological writings?

The present concern is not with Bonhoeffer's view of the essential church but with the empirical church in the world.

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[1] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 222.

Ecclesiology

The church, Bonhoeffer declares, is "at once a historical community and established by God."[1] The church is a divine mandate having as its task the proclamation of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. The church affirms in faith the salvation of the world through Jesus Christ. The church stands vicariously for all mankind. Bonhoeffer stresses the importance of a concrete knowledge of the reality of the world for the proclamation of God's Word by the church.

Concerning the church itself Bonhoeffer distinguishes between the superiority or authority of the spiritual office or ministry and the inferiority or obedience of the congregation. The equality of all believers in the essential church is changed to a hierarchical order in the empirical church. This order Bonhoeffer believes to be a divinely established relationship.

Furthermore, Bonhoeffer emphasizes the "otherness" of the life of the church as a witnessing community from worldly life in general, and the complete separation of the spiritual office as a divinely bestowed task from the mandate of government, specifically.

Though it is the mandate of the church to proclaim Christ's reign over the world, the church is one among the mandates which together make possible a Christian life in the world.

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[1] The Communion of Saints, p. 88.

The Church of the Prison Letters

Bonhoeffer's criticism of traditional Christianity and the church in his prison letters shows that God's Word can no longer be brought to man as the voice of the father who speaks in a "religious" terminology to his dependent child. Man has grown up and accepts the challenges of life, successes and failures, confident of his own strength. Man lives in the world _etsi_ _deus_ _non_ _daretur_. However, Bonhoeffer still regards the proclamation of the Word of God as the essential function of the church. But how does the church speak of God to man who has come of age? And what will be the place of the church in a world which has come of age?

The message of the church to the world must be of God who is in the center of life and not remote from the world. Through God's participation in man's struggle in the world the distinction between Christian and worldly life has ceased to exist, but not the distinction between the ultimate and the penultimate. Bonhoeffer believes that the partnership between God and man can be conveyed to man only by pointing out Christ's life and death for all men. But the church must not address the world by way of the traditional interpretation of biblical concepts, which in Bonhoeffer's view do not change their intrinsic meaning, but by way of a non-religious interpretation. The church must speak of God to man in worldly terms. Religion in the traditional sense, therefore, is no longer the prerequisite of man's salvation.

It seems to be advisable to point out at this place that Bonhoeffer replaced the notion "religionless Christianity" by the phrase "non-religious interpretation of biblical concepts." E. Bethge comments as follows:

> Bonhoeffer himself used the term "religionless Christianity" only in the first theological letter from Tegel, April 30, 1944 (twice there), i.e., just when starting his new approach. The phrase used in all the following letters is "non-religious interpretation" or some closely connected derivative (about eleven times).
>
> Bonhoeffer's term is in no sense limited to exegesis and better preaching, for his attack on present institutional and creedal establishments of Christianity was no less than revolutionary. But in his task he preferred the more modest label of "interpretation."[1]

Concerning the future church itself Bonhoeffer demands that the church must follow the example of Christ, the man for others. The church must renounce its privileges and see its sole function in the service of God and men. A church free from material wealth and possessions does not mean the dissolution of the church as has been claimed by some interpreters of Bonhoeffer's letters. The church remains the church. It is no longer based on a hierarchical order, but practizes the equality of all believers which was attained before only in the essential church. Bonhoeffer is convinced that the outward form of the church will change beyond recognition, but the essential church and its message will remain. The essence of the Christian message will be preserved by what Bonhoeffer calls "arcane discipline" until "the day will come when man will be called again to utter the word of God with such power as will change and renew the world."[1]

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[1] Bethge, "Bonhoeffer's Christology and His 'Religionless Christianity'," p. 61n.

The Present and the Future Church

Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the unity of Christian thought and action in the reality of the world links his ecclesiological writings and his view of the future church. The church remains a divine mandate witnessing to the concreteness of the revelation.

In addition, a caesura can be disproved by noting that Bonhoeffer refers in his ecclesiological writings not only to the church's proclamation of the reign of Christ over the world, but also to the proclamation of the cross of Christ. The cross is the place where the reality of God and the reality of the world meet. "Genuine worldliness," Bonhoeffer asserts in his Ethics, "is possible solely and exclusively on the basis of the proclamation of the cross of Jesus Christ."[2] Moreover, anticipating the ministry of the future church, Bonhoeffer wrote as early as 1935: "The restoration of the church will come from a new kind of monasticism, which has in common with the old only an uncompromising life based on the Sermon on the Mount in the following of Christ."[3]

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[1] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 188.

[2] Ethics, p. 298.

[3] Gesammelte Schriften, III, p. 25.

Not the abandonment, but the restoration of the church is the task which Bonhoeffer outlines in his letters from prison. In this endeavor the concept of mandate assumes its full significance. While Luther considered the church as a divine and therefore absolutely valid ordinance in the world, Bonhoeffer regards the empirical church as a historical institution which fulfills a divine commission in the world. In Bonhoeffer's view the church had failed in its task. Bonhoeffer accepts the challenge of a world come of age not by hiding behind dogma and tradition, but by casting away outdated forms in the church and in the Christian life in the world. To serve Christ and men as partner in a world come of age is the task of the future church.

Bonhoeffer's view of the church reflects a movement which began from within and ends outside the church in the world. Bonhoeffer thus validates Troeltsch's claim that the church as a sociological institution may be judged from the outside. Bonhoeffer's assessment of the history of the Christwest follows the opposite course. He begins from the outside by looking at history from the perspective of the church, he ends within the world by evaluating history from the perspective of his own involvement. Bonhoeffer's prison cell may be considered the Archimedean point which allows him to bring into clear focus the reality of Christ, the church, and Christian life and the reality of the world.

Thus far the comparison between Bonhoeffer's earlier christological and ecclesiological writings and the new interpretation of Christ and the church in the prison letters emphasized the theological aspect of the foundation of his social philosophy. In the following comparison of Bonhoeffer's assessment of history in his *Ethics* and his new evaluation in the letters from prison the problem of a caesura is of crucial importance for the validity of his social philosophy in a world come of age.

History

Bonhoeffer's essay "Inheritance and Decay" in his *Ethics* as well as his new assessment of history in his letters from prison reveal his concern for the future, the coming generations. The unity of God and the world or of faith and reason is again the central theme of both evaluations. Bonhoeffer retains in his earlier essay and in his letters his general conception of human history as a history of salvation. For Bonhoeffer the central event is and remains the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Christ is the center of history.

"Inheritance and Decay"

As has been pointed out several times, Bonhoeffer speaks of the church as "at once a historical community and established by God."[1] However, in *The Communion of Saints* and in Act and Being Bonhoeffer strongly stresses that the church is the revelational reality of God. The formula: Christ existing as the church is based on his claim that in the church the essential structure of the community is manifest. The original community of the primal state, the community of love, was restored by Christ in the community of saints, the church. The church, established by God in the primal state, becomes a historical community and as the corpus Christi the norm for sociality in history. Here one must find the basis for Bonhoeffer's claim that Christ is the center of history and that the church is the hidden center of world history. Since history extends from God to God the church as the Body of Christ is thus a meta-historical entity in the midst of world history.

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[1] *The Communion of Saints*, p. 88.

Bonhoeffer consequently claims that through Christ the West became a historical unity. The western world became the corpus christianum which ended with the Reformation. Christ existing as the church, the una sancta ecclesia catholica, the unity of faith of Christendom broke apart in the corpus Christi and the world. The centrifugal movement of the world from its center Jesus Christ and the true Catholic Church, the secularization of man and world, began.

While the first part of Bonhoeffer's essay, the West's inheritance, reflects the unity of his Christology and Ecclesiology, the second part, the West's decay, reveals the separation of Christology and Ecclesiology. Christ is now the Lord of the world, the church is nothing but a section of humanity in which Christ has taken form.

Bonhoeffer believes that the destruction of the corpus christianum was caused by the misinterpretation of the true intentions of the Reformation. The result was the separation of the church and the world. The church became self-centered, an end in itself, a clerical power in the world.

The freedom of the Christian man, proclaimed by the Reformation, led to the secularization of the world, the defection from Christ. The dangers confronting Christianity and the church by the emancipation of reason and the growing autonomy of the world, Bonhoeffer believes, can only be averted by a renewal of faith and by the force of order. The renewal of faith can only come from thinking in one sphere, i.e., the Lordship of Christ, the mediator, over the whole world. The unity of faith as it existed during the Middle Ages in the corpus christianum, the oneness of reality, must be restored.

Hanfried Müller comments on Bonhoeffer's attempt of a restoration of Christianity and the church by a return to the past and writes:

> Because Christ had become for Bonhoeffer the history of the West, he was no longer the coming one, but the form of the inheritance, the past. In the ideology of the Christian West he was no longer present as the crucified, nor still to come as the resurrected one. He had become the form of reality, and therefore history had become a religious law.[1]

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[1] World Come of Age, p. 204.

Bonhoeffer expresses the unity of the church and the world in Christ in his notion of the oneness of reality. Though united in Christ, Bonhoeffer's view of reality comprises two aspects, the ultimate reality of God and the penultimate reality of the world. It is precisely the notion of the ultimate and the penultimate on which Hans Schmidt bases his severe criticism of Bonhoeffer's historical writings..He believes that Bonhoeffer failed to understand the problem of history at all. Concerning the paradoxical relationship between God in eternity, the ultimate, and man in time, the penultimate, both united through Christ, Schmidt writes:

> This is a destructive dialectic of time and eternity which is only for a last short while held together by a reconciling dialectic of the reality of Christ. That is, the reality of Christ itself is synomynous with the strange paradox of a simultaneity of a separating and reconciling *dialectic* of time and eternity, Creation and salvation, so that 'the Christian life means neither a destruction nor a sanctioning of the penultimate.'[1]

Bonhoeffer descibes the penultimate, the preserved world, as the natural. The natural is the realm of reason. Reason guides man's action in accordance with the natural, the good. Bonhoeffer thus acknowledges the contributions of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment to the struggle for man's freedom and dignity.

Consequently Bonhoeffer's essay "Inheritance and Decay" cannot be considered as an one-sided condemnation of the secularization of the world as godlessness, but it must also be regarded as an awareness of the weaknesses and failures of traditional Christianity and the strength and successes of the secular world. John A. Phillips observes:

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[1] *World Come of Age*, p. 232.

> Bonhoeffer seems unable to decide between an affirmation of secularism which would run the risk of lapsing into 'cheap grace', and a condemnation of secularism as the Anti-Christ which would lead him to the retrenchment and radicalism he wants to avoid.[1]

The growing awareness of the autonomy of man and the world evident in the early essay becomes the recognition and acceptance of a world coming of age in Bonhoeffer's prison letters. The recovery of Christ in a world come of age, the centripetal movement to its lost center, is Bonhoeffer's task in the prison letters.

History in the Prison Letters

It has been said at the outset that Bonhoeffer's essay "Inheritance and Decay" represents his view of history looked at from the outside, from the perspective of the church, while his prison letters, contrariwise, reflect the view from within history, from the perspective of the world. Adopting Bonhoeffer's christocentric interpretation of history, one can detect the following development in his essay.

Christocracy over the corpus christianum, the actual unity of church and world in faith, is replaced by a Christocracy which is actual only in the church but not in the world. The world frees itself from the visible church representing the Lordship of Christ over the world. The confrontation of the corpus Christi, the essential and the empirical church, and the world ends with the loss of its center Jesus Christ.

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[1] The Form of Christ in the World, p. 149.

The feature distinguishing Bonhoeffer's earlier evaluation of the development of the Christian west from the view in his prison letters is his acceptance of the world as the world and the renewal of the Christocracy over the world by a suffering and humiliated Christ.

E. Bethge, commenting on Bonhoeffer's new interpretation of Christ and the world, writes: "Bonhoeffer's indications do not derive from a capitulation before the modern godless world, they originate from the concentrated meditation into the essence and life of the founder of our faith."[1] In other words, Bonhoeffer is not concerned with discovering the world come of age as such, but with the place of Christ in this new world. As Bonhoeffer writes in his letter of June 8, 1944: "The question is, Christ and the newly matured world."[2] John A. Phillips remarks:

> Bonhoeffer recognizes that the recovery of Christ for us today will begin by taking seriously the question of history, accepting man in his secular

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[1] "Bonhoeffers Andeutungen entspringen nicht der Kapitulation vor der modernen gottlosen Welt; sie kommen aus der konzentrierten Versenkung in Wesen und Leben des Stifters unseres Glaubens." Mündige Welt, II, p. 100. (translation mine)

[2] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 197.

> condition and, in the light of incarnation itself, turning away from the certainty of 'positivism of revelation' to the uncertainty of searching for Christian existence in a world come of age.[1]

Bonhoeffer had commented in his letters on Barth's view and claimed that it represents a 'positivism of revelation'. According to Barth, the church is the place where the revelation is proclaimed. Consequently, he holds that it is for the world to decide whether or not to accept the message of the church. For Barth, therefore, the church is and remains the church, and the world is and remains the world.

Is Bonhoeffer's effort to reconcile Christ and the world or faith and reason successful?

The new interpretation of Christ and the significance of the cross conveyed to the world in non-religious language is Bonhoeffer's solution. The world come of age means at the same time the end of the time of religion. Hence the newness of the prison letters must be found in the combination of Bonhoeffer's acceptance of the secularization of the world and the new Christology. In contrast to Barth, Bonhoeffer believes that revelation must not be based on the visible church as the reality of revelation in the world, but in Christ in the forms of worldly life.

The concreteness of revelation in the world come of age consists in the living of the life of Christ in the world, life "for others" and for the world. Participation in the fulness of life, its polyphony to use Bonhoeffer's expression, is the formula which describes the Christian life in a world come of age.

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[1] The Form of Christ in the World, p. 172.

Bonhoeffer's contention that Christ claims the world come of age for himself and his polemics against Christian apologetics are based on the personalism and the notion of ethical transcendence developed in The Communion of Saints. The response to the moral claim of the other person and thus moral responsibility of the individual derives not only from Christ's vicarious action, but also from man's reason. Man as a rational being is an ethical person.

Bonhoeffer thus combines in his view of the Christian man in the world come of age the chiliastic view of man proclaimed by the Enlightenment and a theologia crucis. Consequently the secular existence of man in a godless world derives from and is enclosed by Bonhoeffer's view of the cross, the God-forsakenness of Christ in the world. "The God who makes us live in this world without using him as a working hypothesis," Bonhoeffer writes,"is the God before whom we are ever standing. Before God and with him we live without God."[1]

Concerning Bonhoeffer's view of man's coming of age, E. Bethge writes:

> The recognition of man's coming of age is for Bonhoeffer neither philosophy not phenomenology, but recognition of God, that is, "theology", and that is recognition,

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[1] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 219.

> which wants to follow God there where he was present before us.[1]

God was present in Christ on the cross. God's transcendence is His descendence. God is the center of life as the suffering and humiliated Lord. God and man in the world together is the essential meaning of Bonhoeffer's new interpretation of history.

H. Müller comments:

> The change in his view of history may be seen as the _external_ reason, as the cause of his theological reversal, and his reformation as the _internal_ reason for the liberation to take up a new world view.[2]

W. Hamiltom remarks about Bonhoeffer's new interpretation of Christ and the world: "The coming of age means the secularization of all life, even the religious life of man, and thus the non-religious interpretation is not just a possible apologetic strategy, it is demanded by intellectual honesty."[3]

The conflict between faith and reason which Bonhoeffer tries to overcome with his notion of a suffering God has not been solved by Bonhoeffer, according to Schmidt. Pointing out that Bonhoeffer could not give up the reality of Christ for the sake of his belief, and the reality of the world for the sake of his intellectual honesty, Schmidt asks:

> Was it not doing violence to the situation to make

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[1] "Mündigkeitserkenntnis ist bei Bonhoeffer weder Philosophie noch Phänomenologie, sondern Gotteserkenntnis, d. h. "Theologie"; und das ist Erkenntnis, die Gott dorthin nachkommen will, wo er schon vor uns anwesend war." E. Bethge, _Dietrich Bonhoeffer_(München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag,1967), p. 973. (translation mine)

[2] _World Come of Age_, p. 205. [3] _Ibid_., p. 151.

> a virtue of obedient God-forsakenness out of the distress of Godlessness, in order to solve the complications of a nineteen-hundred-year-old tradition of Western Christian culture.[1]

The controversy concerning Bonhoeffer's view of history in the prison letters, especially his evaluation of the function of reason in history, is best illustrated by comparing the views of H. Müller and H. Schmidt.

H. Müller judges Bonhoeffer from a Marxist perspective, i.e., on the basis that the self-sufficiency of autonomous man can bring about the millennium, the classless society, in history. Müller contends that Bonhoeffer's unification of a *theologia crucis* with immanent optimism shows a new way for mankind. In Müller's opinion this new way is the achievement of man's reason. Concerning Bonhoeffer's new appraisal of reason, Müller claims that "Bonhoeffer is not concerned with the use of autonomous reason, but with the autonomous use of reason."[2] The autonomous use of man's reason results in what Müller describes as man's "*liberation* to a non-religious, atheistic ideology."[3]

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 240.

[2] "Es geht ihm nicht um den Gebrauch der autonomen Vernunft, sondern um den autonomen Gebrauch der Vernunft." Hanfied Müller, *Von der Kirche zur Welt* (Hamburg-Bergstedt: Herbert Reich Evangelischer Verlag GmbH., 1961), p. 359. (translation mine)

[3] "*Befreiung* zu einer nichtreligiösen, atheistischen Weltanschauung." *Ibid*., p. 402. (translation mine)

Schmidt, on the contrary, considers Bonhoeffer's trust in the self-sufficiency of reason a fateful illusion, a premature judgment akin to the myth of a belief in science. He writes:

> Both prejudices were bound to deliver unconditionally the 'open church of Jesus Christ, which serves the world' and which is the church only 'when it is there for others' to the understanding of self, world and history of a methodical atheism, which is never neutral, whatever may be asserted to the contrary.[1]

In rebuttal to Schmidt's criticism it should suffice to cite Bonhoeffer's letter written at the occasion of the baptism of W.D.R. He wrote:

> We have constantly exaggerated the importance of reason and justice in the historical process . . . So you are learning from childhood that the world is controlled by forces against which reason is powerless.[2]

In conclusion it can be said that Bonhoeffer considers the world come of age still a fallen world in which genuine worldliness is possible only through man's participation as an autonomous being in the sufferings of God in the world. Christ is still the center of history. "The word of Christ," Bonhoeffer writes in his Ethics,"is the interpretation of his existence, and it is therefore the interpretation of that reality in which history attains its fulfilment."[3]

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[1] World Come of Age, p. 241.

[2] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 185.

[3] Ethics, p. 230.

Bonhoeffer's quest for the presence of Christ in the world thus links his historical essay in the Ethics with the new evaluation of the history of the Christian west in the prison letters.

The comparison[1] between Bonhoeffer's christological, ecclesiological and historical writings, the foundation of his social philosophy, and his letters from prison can best be summarized by stating: While traditional Christianity regarded obedience to the risen Lord as the essence of faith, religionless Christianity recognizes in Christ's suffering on the cross that the essence of the Christian faith is love. To have made clear this distinction is Bonhoeffer's contribution in the prison letters.

Is a Christian life ordered by the divine mandates still possible in the light of the prison letters?

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[1] The comparison was greatly aided by the writings of Eberhard Bethge, Jürgen Moltmann and Jürgen Weissbach (cf. Bibliography).

CHAPTER XVI

THE LETTERS FROM PRISON AND BONHOEFFER'S SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

It has been said that Bonhoeffer's prison letters constitute a new interpretation of the relationship between Christ and the world. In the foregoing chapter the novelty of the prison letters has been shown in their theological and historical aspects by comparing the letters with Bonhoeffer's earlier christological, ecclesiological and historical writings.

The newness of the prison letters as seen from the perspective of theology consists in Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the humanity of Christ; the novelty as seen from the perspective of history is contained in Bonhoeffer's notion of the world come of age. E. Bethge, commenting on the relationship between Bonhoeffer's earlier writings and the letters from prison, notes:"The notion 'the world for Christ' which was becoming one-sided required a strong correction by the notion 'Christ for the world'. But this changed the view of the world and of Christ."[1]

The theological and historical aspects of Bonhoeffer's new interpretation of Christ's place and function in the fallen world are expressed in the key phrases "religionless Christianity" and "world come of age." But the world come of age is still the fallen and preserved world, the penultimate. Regarding Bonhoeffer's preoccupation with the penultimate in the prison letters John A. Phillips remarks:

> In their present form, the prison letters reflect the final separation of Bonhoeffer's Christology and his conception of revelation from ecclesiology and the search for a spatial 'concretion'. Here is no 'community of revelation' or 'Christ existing as the church', no 'Mandates'. Here we do not even find 'conformation' or 'Christ taking form'.[2]

The restoration of the Ethics has been replaced by the reformation of the prison letters.

At the end of the last chapter the question was raised, is a Christian life ordered by divine mandates still possible in the light of the prison letters? In other words, is Bonhoeffer's social philosophy still relevant in a world come of age? This question will be answered affirmatively since Bonhoeffer's understanding of the autonomy of man in a world come of age is ultimately based on the Lutheran notion of the freedom of the Christian man. This affirmative answer will be substantiated as follows: First, a brief exposition of and comments on the key ideas concerning autonomous man in a world come of age will serve as starting point and as criterion for the inquiry. Second, Bonhoeffer's earlier view of man as an individual and as a social being will be compared with his view of autonomous man in a world come of age. Third, Bonhoeffer's theory of mandates will be examined and its relevancy for the world come of age will be evaluated.

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[1] "So bedurfte ein einseitig werdendes "Die Welt für Christus" der kräftigen Korrektur durch das "Christus für die Welt". Das veränderte aber den Blick auf die Welt und auf Christus." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 961. (translation mine)

[2] The Form of Christ in the World, pp. 141-42.

Autonomous Man in a World come of Age

The central problem underlying Bonhoeffer's prison letters is again the relationship between God and the world or between faith and reason. As has been pointed out before, Bonhoeffer overcomes in his earlier writings the thinking in two spheres by his notion of the oneness of reality. Christ, the pantocrat, is the center of reality uniting the ultimate reality of God with the penultimate reality of the world.

In the prison letters Bonhoeffer replaces Christ's Lordship by Christ's humanity; the omnipotent Lord gives way to the powerless Lord who conquers the world by his weakness. God's descendence or Bonhoeffer's notion of a suffering God seems to abolish the distinction between the ultimate and the penultimate. Concerning the prison letters, W. Hamilton notes: "The distinction between the penultimate and the ultimate is gone, and instead we have 'participation in the suffering of God at the hands of a godless world'."[1]

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[1] World Come of Age, p. 154.

But does Bonhoeffer give up the distinction between the ultimate and the penultimate?

Bonhoeffer's assertion that God's transcendence is His descendence certainly does mean that the ultimate enters the penultimate. The incarnation and the cross symbolize God's freedom for man in Christ and his suffering in the world. But Bonhoeffer also says that "God is the "beyond" in the midst of our life."[1] God shares, through Christ, in man's suffering, but God is also other than man.

Bonhoeffer's notion of God's freedom for man and His otherness has previously been explained with reference to the concept of ethical transcendence. But God's otherness is most evident in the cross as the condemnation of the world and also in the resurrection as the world's God-forsakenness. Only in the God-man Jesus Christ is the ultimate reality of God reconciled with the reality of the fallen world, the penultimate. Thus Bonhoeffer's theologia crucis emphasizes the humanity of Christ without abandoning the distinction between the ultimate and the penultimate.

W. Hamilton comments further on Bonhoeffer's seemingly paradoxical request that autonomous man in a world come of age must share in God's suffering in the world. He writes:

> We seem not to be asked to live etsi deus non daretur, but in the suffering of the God who is very much given

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[1] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 166.

> and at hand. The world come of age seems somewhat pushed aside, and in its place is the world in which God suffers.[1]

But Bonhoeffer does ask autonomous man in a world come of age to share in God's suffering. The answer is to be found in God's relation to the world and in Christ's relation to the world.

The world is God's creation. The relationship between Creator and creation will never change. To affirm the world as the world and thus to establish the distinction between Creator and creation, God sends His Son into the world. Christ experiences on the cross the otherness of God, i.e., the God-forsakenness of the world.

When Bonhoeffer speaks of autonomous man living in the world as if God were not given, he speaks of the autonomy of the world, the world on its own as the creation separated from its Creator. He also speaks of the otherness, the aseity of God and the God-forsakenness of the world.

Whenever Bonhoeffer speaks of man's sharing in God's suffering in the world, he is not referring to God the Father, but to God the Son, that is, to Jesus Christ. Christ drank the earthly cup to the lees and so must man in the world come of age. R. G. Smith comments on the relationship between Christ and Bonhoeffer's notion of the world come of age:

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[1] World Come of Age, p. 154.

> [Bonhoeffer's] understanding of the Christian faith enables him, indeed compels him, to place the ultimate source of this movement [i.e., the growing autonomy of man and the world] in the very heart of Christianity. That is to say, it is the life of Christ himself which liberates the world.[1]

Referring to Bonhoeffer's christocentric interpretation of the world come of age, W. Hamilton notes: "The world come of age, which before had seemed to demand a non-religious interpretation, receives as 'religious' an interpretation as one can conceive."[2]

The purpose of the preceding comments was to show that Bonhoeffer's world come of age is still a Christian world. The question arises, if the world of the prison letters is a Christian world can it also be a world come of age? In other words, can Bonhoeffer justifiably speak of a world come of age and of autonomous man and simultaneously affirm the Christian view of the world as a fallen world and of man as a sinner?

The problem is the compatibility of the world come of age as an empirical judgement concerning a historical process and the unhistorical Christian interpretation of man's history. The answer, therefore, depends on the interpretation of the meaning of Bonhoeffer's notion "world come of age." E. Bethge provides this explanation: "The notion "coming of age" is for Bonhoeffer, . . . a living declaration, a necessary risk in granting what, in an irreversible process of adolescence, each man and group deserves."[1] Consequently Bonhoeffer's understanding of the historical process which he describes as the world's coming of age can only be interpreted as meaning man's affirmation of life in contrast to the other-worldliness of traditional Christianity. The result of this movement towards man's autonomy was that the God of traditional Christianity became obsolete.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 17. [2] _Ibid_., p. 155.

Present-day God-is-dead theologians claim Bonhoeffer as one of their precursors on account of his recognition and acknowledgment of this historical phenomenon which is best described as the secularization of the world. However, Bonhoeffer does not abolish God. On the contrary, as has been shown, Bonhoeffer's world come of age is a world of a _deus absconditus_ and of a _Christus praesens_.

To sum up: The letters from prison may thus be regarded as Bonhoeffer's attempt to preserve the essence of Christianity in a world come of age. Emphasizing the entering of the ultimate, the reality of God, through Jesus Christ into the penultimate, the world, Bonhoeffer envisions the essence of Christianity in the suffering Christ. Though history reflects the growing emancipation of reason, autonomous man in a world come of age, Bonhoeffer insists, can and must base his life on the true meaning of the Christian faith. The true meaning of Christianity is the humanity of

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[1] Bethge, "Bonhoeffer's Christology and His 'Religionless Christianity'," p. 68.

Christ which affirms the world as the world and man as man.

The reality of the world is the place of Christian life. The world come of age means the abandonment of a false conception of God. Christian life in the world come of age is characterized by religionless Christianity or, in other words, by the this-worldliness of Christianity. Genuine worldliness is therefore Christian worldliness. Christian life is thus the affirmation of the world come of age in which the Christian as autonomous man bears witness to God in a worldly form of imitatio Christi by sharing in the suffering of Christ. Personal faith thus preserves the Christian's identity as a Christian, while personal responsibility identifies him with the world come of age.

How does this view of the individual compare with Bonhoeffer's earlier view as stated in his social philosophy?

The Christian and Autonomous Man

Bonhoeffer's emphasis on sin determines and characterizes his interpretation of man as an individual and as a social being in his social philosophy. Adhering to the Christian interpretation of history, Bonhoeffer believes that man lives after the Fall in the relative freedom of natural life. Guided by reason and his conscience, autonomous man determines his own destiny. Thus man is free to accept or to reject in faith his redemption by Christ.

Bonhoeffer contrasts Christian life guided by faith and ethical life guided by reason. While autonomous man lives in a world separated from God, the Christian lives in a world which through Christ has become the penultimate and which is therefore united with God, the ultimate reality. Ethical life is based on man's autonomy as a rational being, but Christian life is centered upon Christ. The Christian, though bound to natural life, shares in the life of Christ and is thus free for God and also free from the world. While autonomous man must decide for himself what is good by using his conscience and his knowledge of good and evil, the Christian lives under the guidance of conscience liberated from ethical conflict with Christ in total response to the Word of God. The essential feature which distinguishes Christian from ethical life is that the Christian lives fully in the world in order to oppose the world.

Both, the Christian and autonomous man live within the framework of certain rights and duties in natural life. Christ is the Christian's absolute criterion determining his actions in life, while it is the principle of _suum cuique_ for autonomous man.

For the Christian,natural rights derive from God; for autonomous man,natural rights derive from man's nature itself. Each man occupies a certain station in life with its attending rights and duties. Bonhoeffer contends that the structure of human society with its distinctions between superiority and inferiority is reflected in the ethical by the relationship between moral authority and obedience. Moral authority derives its legitimation not from man himself but from a concrete objective commission, from man's station in life. Thus the ethical confronts man with a multiplicity of duties. While autonomous man can only mediate the conflict of duties, the Christian's fellowship with Christ frees his conscience from the conflict of duties in the world.

In Bonhoeffer's view the ethical, therefore, remains always an event at the border of life. Moral authority ultimately rests in the commandment of God, revealed in Jesus Christ. The supreme duty of the Christian is his obedience to the call of Christ. By following Christ, the Christian shares fully in life, while autonomous man shares in life only within the bounds of the ought.

The contrast between life determined by faith and life determined by reason shows that from the Christian point of view man's claim to moral autonomy cannot be maintained. Sin is the destruction of man's communion with God which cannot be restored by reason but only by faith. Therefore, not reason, but obedience to God's law based on his faith in God is the Christian's absolute and supreme guide in natural life.

What essential features distinguish Bonhoeffer's earlier interpretation of man from his view of man as hinted at in the prison letters?

Bonhoeffer's earlier view is characterized by a strong emphasis on the distinction between Christian and worldly life. "Christian life," Bonhoeffer writes, "is participation in the encounter of Christ with the world."[1] Christ came to redeem the fallen world. Consequently obedience or conforming to Christ is the essence of the Christian's life in the world. "Only he who obeys," Bonhoeffer insists, "can believe."[2] It is the task of the Christian to conform the world, the realm of reason and the ethical, to the form of Christ. The rule of faith over reason thus characterizes Bonhoeffer's earlier view of man.

In the prison letters Bonhoeffer replaces the distinction between Christian and worldly life by the full acceptance of the world as the world. Christianity's _Weltabgewandtheit_ (turning away from the world) is changed into a _Weltzugewandtheit_ (turning towards the world). Man is no longer primarily a _homo religiosus_, but autonomous man. Man is still asked to participate in Christ's encounter with the world; but this encounter takes place at the cross. "Man is challenged," Bonhoeffer writes,"to participate in the sufferings of God at the hands of a godless world."[1] Not the obedience of dependent man to God, but the free participation in God's activities in the world characterizes Bonhoeffer's view of the life of the Christian as autonomous man in the world come of age.

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[1] _Ethics_, p. 133.

[2] _The Cost of Discipleship_, p. 73.

It has been shown that Bonhoeffer's world come of age is still a Christian world. Man, according to Bonhoeffer's earlier description of the Christian world, lives in God-given orders. Bonhoeffer develops these orders or structures of life in his theory of mandates, the core of his social philosophy. Is Bonhoeffer's social philosophy still relevant in a world come of age?

The Theory of Mandates and the World come of Age

The Christian's worldly life under the reign of Christ is the central theme of Bonhoeffer's theory of mandates. What are the essential features characterizing the life of the Christian in the mandates as the concrete forms of God's commandment in the world? Before answering this question a few remarks concerning the nature of the mandates in general seem to be appropriate.

Bonhoeffer's view of the origin and the nature of the mandates is determined by his notion of the oneness of all reality. Bonhoeffer regards the mandates in the penultimate as a preparation for a true Christian life patterned after their celestial prototypes.

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[1] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 222.

However, in Bonhoeffer's view the relation between the divine archetypes and the mandates is not one of an *analogia entis* but one of an *analogia relationis*. This means that the integration of human relations in sociality must be patterned according to the trinitarian reign of God. Consequently the mandates are not based on the identity of God and the world, but on the relation established by Christ between God and the world, i.e., the unity of God and the world. In other words, Christ's fulfilling God's commandment established the new order of God in the world and thus the mandates, which as the concrete forms of God's commandment determine the relations among men in their historical existence. The divinity of the mandates rests therefore on Christ's entering human history.

The mandates, however, are not absolute values, but functional values in that they are valid only as long as they serve Christ. Though the mandates in history are concrete and bound to given historical situations, their nature is nevertheless pre-volitional and meta-historical. The mandates are thus the framework of man's existence in the world.

Returning to the question asked above, what are the essential features determining the Christian's worldly life in the mandates?

The most important and thus central feature of Bonhoeffer's theory of mandates is the concept of deputyship derived from his notion of the oneness of reality. Christ's deputyship for all men determines the functions of the mandates as the concrete forms of God's commandment in the world. Divine deputyship becomes man's deputyship for his fellowman (mitmenschliche Stellvertretung). Deputyship is man's responsibility to God and men. Deputyship or responsible life is thus the essence of Bonhoeffer's theory of mandates.

How does the Christian actually discharge his responsibility to God and men within the structure of the four mandates?

Besides Bonhoeffer's general understanding of the mandates as deputyship or as a divine commission, another aspect is clearly discernible in Bonhoeffer's theory of mandates. This aspect, derived again from the notion of the oneness of reality, concerns what Bonhoeffer calls the "claiming, seizure and the formation of a definite earthly domain by the divine commandment."[1]

Human existence in marriage and family, labor, government or Obrigkeit and the church is regarded by Bonhoeffer as belonging to the realm of divine mandates. The bearer of the mandate has the responsibility to execute within the mandate the divine commandment, that is, God's will. The mandate as a divine commission thus entails the bestowal of divine authority upon an earthly agent. The internal structure of the mandate represents a hierarchical order based on the relation of authority and obedience. "By virtue of the divine warrant," Bonhoeffer writes, "there is established in the sphere of the mandate an unalterable relation of superiority and inferiority."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 287.

To sum up: The mandate as a divine commission is, first, the formation of a worldly domain, secondly, the carrying out of God's will or commandment within the mandate. The mandate is thus the place of the Christian's obedience in faith (Glaubensgehorsam) in the world. To answer the question raised above, the Christian discharges his responsibility to God and men by obedience in faith to Christ. The mandates thus represent orders or structures of life which are of divine origin and thus appeal to man's faith and not to man's reason.

Does the exclusive theocratic or, better, christocratic orientation of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy abandon the freedom of man, his autonomy?

The answer to this crucial question depends entirely upon the interpretation of Bonhoeffer's understanding of deputyship as a relation between authority and obedience or superiority and inferiority. Bonhoeffer's view concerning the problem of authority is determined by his training as a Lutheran theologian and by his own intellectual heritage which is closely bound to the bourgeois virtues of the nineteenth century. A brief account of the two sources may help to prevent a misinterpretation of Bonhoeffer's notion of deputyship as a relation between superiority and inferiority.

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[1] Ethics, p. 289.

The Reformation rejected the institutional authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Luther replaced the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church, culminating in the Pope as Christ's vicar on earth, by the authority of the Bible and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The Bible is the sole and absolute norm which guides the church and thus Christian life in the world. But the direct relation between the Christian and God as well as the individual interpretation of the Bible failed to establish the unity of the Protestant Church as a community of believers in the world. The survival of the Protestant Church could be insured only by organizational measures.

First, it required the organization of the ministry as an office (Amt) of the proclamation of God's Word. The theological exegesis of the authority of the Bible with regard to man's existence in the world established the distinction between the spiritual office and the congregation. This distinction, it may be recalled, is reflected in Bonhoeffer's view of the mandate of the church as the superiority of the ministry and the inferiority of the congregation.

Secondly, the Protestant Church needed, in its struggle against the Roman Catholic Church and the Emperor, the support of secular powers. The result was not only the Protestant Church's close alliance with its protectors, but also the sanctioning of the prevailing social order.

Luther's view of secular _Obrigkeit_ has been stated before within the context of the mandate of government. It should suffice to recall at this place that according to Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms the secular _Obrigkeit_ derives its authority from God and is directly responsible to God. Both, the church as spiritual _Obrigkeit_ and the state as secular _Obrigkeit_, serve God. God, the Father, rules and provides for men, his children. Luther's view of _Obrigkeit_ thus reflects a father-child relationship. Faith in God, therefore, obligates the Christian not only to obedience to God's authority, but also to obedience to the spiritual and secular _Obrigkeit_ instituted by God. Consequently Bonhoeffer's view that the internal structure of the mandate as a divine commission must be based on the relation between authority and obedience derives primarily from Luther's doctrine of _Obrigkeit_.

In the light of the historical development of Protestantism it is not surprising to note that Bonhoeffer generally condemns in his first evaluation of history man's growing autonomy as an apostasy from God and Christ. Bonhoeffer's suggestion to restore Christianity and the church by a reawakening of faith and the force of order can only be regarded as the logical consequence of his Lutheran outlook on history.

However, a cursory glance at the history of Protestantism's relation with secular powers, especially its close ties with the absolute kings of Prussia and later with the German Emperors and the wealthy bourgeoisie should make abundantly clear that the reality of the historical situation did not correspond at all with Bonhoeffer's view. Prussia can certainly be regarded as a classical example of the Christian virtue of obedience to ecclesiastical and secular authority. A negative and a positive aspect concerning obedience as virtue may be noted. First, the negative aspect of obedience as blind obedience.

In Prussia obedience was not only considered to be a virtue, but also man's supreme duty. From the cradle to the grave man always had to obey some authority. The child obeys his parents, the pupil or student his teachers, the apprentice his master, the citizen his government from the lowest to the highest level and the believer his church authorities. Though man's obedience has been praised as loyalty to God, king and fatherland, the glorification of obedience as a virtue resulted actually in reducing man to a willing means to an end.

No one can deny that Protestantism in the form of the state church strongly emphasizes the aspects of obedience and duty in man's life. However, when Luther spoke of the Christian's obedience to authority, he meant the voluntary obedience of the free man and not obedience enforced by power alone. Two attitudes characterize the Christian's obedience to authority or *Obrigkeit*.

The Christian's obedience to spiritual *Obrigkeit* is characterized by respect and reverence. Obedience is thus a part of Christian piety.

Luther's interpretation of the Christian's obedience to secular Obrigkeit, however, emphasizes man's rational nature. It is important to note that in Luther's view secular *Obrigkeit* rests on three basic conditions: authority, justice, power. The Christian as a free man, therefore, is subject to secular authority not because it has power, but on account of its just and reasonable use of power.

Here the positive aspect of obedience to authority in the actuality of Protestantism's relations with secular powers should be noted. As has been pointed out before, the secular *Obrigkeit* is directly responsible to God for maintaining the God-given order in the world. The dignity of the office as a divine ordinance and the responsibility which pertains to the duties of the office instill in its bearer a sense of obligation and also pride. Not Louis XIV's dictum: Je suis l'état, but Frederick the Great's maxim: Ich bin der erste Diener des Staates (I am the first servant of the state) reflects the Protestant ethics of the Prussian state.

It has been said that the internal structure of the mandates reflects not only Luther's influence on Bonhoeffer, but also the influence of the bourgeois virtues of the nineteenth century. What are those virtues?

Liberalism replaced Obrigkeit or authority represented by an absolute ruler and thus allied with power by the authority of the law. Following Bonhoeffer's distinction between government and the state, Obrigkeit is no longer the government (the ruler) but the state (the ruler and the ruled) under law (Rechtsstaat).

According to liberal thought, the authority of the law and the division of power between the ruler and the ruled eliminated arbitrary decisions and the misuse of power which occured whenever authority was entrusted to men. Obedience to and respect for the authority and universality of the neutral law thus replaced obedience to the power of the office exercised by fallible men.

This view is of particular significance regarding the relation between state and society. The state's function was to secure peace and order and to regulate only in general the life of society. Bonhoeffer adopts this liberal view of the state in describing the relation between the mandate of government and the other mandates.

As a Rechtsstaat, the state, establishing law and order, was subject to its own laws. Both, ruler and ruled were subject to and equal before the law. The bourgeois virtues in a Rechtsstaat consisted in the citizen's respect for the authority of the law, his trust in a just state and his willingness to abide the law.

While Luther's view reflects the feudalistic structure of society and man's childlike dependence on and obedience to the father figure of the ruler, Liberalism reflects a contractual structure of society and man's independence who as an equal partner with the Obrigkeit obeys the authority of the law. Luther's influence is discernable in Bonhoeffer's claim to the dignity of the office as a divine commission and in his belief in the integrity of the person responsible for carrying out the task of his office. The influence of Liberalism can be seen in Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the respect for law and order to insure the welfare of the whole of society.

Theoretically, according to Bonhoeffer's view, obedience to authority is the natural obedience of the Christian as a free man to Obrigkeit which is exercised responsibly and therefore justly as deputyship for God.

But does this view really agree with the actual conditions in life? Is the lowest person in the social hierarchy still a free man? In other words, is it possible to reconcile Bonhoeffer's hierarchical internal structure of the mandates with his view of autonomous man in a world come of age?

A brief look at the history of Protestantism and Liberalism in Germany during the first decades of the twentieth century may aid in answering these questions.

At the turn of the century life in Germany under the guidance of throne and altar seemed to be resting on the firm and safe foundation of law and order. The authority of the law and the long cooperation between Protestantism and the secular powers had conditioned--one cannot describe this process as education--the individual to a respect for authority which can only be characterized as Untertanengeist (spirit of submissiveness). This was especially evident in Prussia.

Bonhoeffer comments on the influence of Protestantism in making obedience the supreme virtue of the Prussian citizen. Regretting his failure to include in his theory of mandates the realm of culture and education, Bonhoeffer writes from his prison cell:

> The man who is ignorant of this sphere of freedom can be a good father, citizen and worker, and even a Christian, but hardly a complete man, and therefore hardly a good Christian in the widest sense of the term. Our Protestant (not Lutheran) Prussian world has been so dominated by the divine decrees, that it has allowed this sphere of freedom to be pushed into the background.[1]

In the light of this historical development it is understandable that Protestantism regarded the collapse of the German Empire in 1918 with its ensuing dissolution of law and order as the loss of its worldly authority.

During the Weimar Republic Protestantism failed to adjust to the changed circumstances. Liberalism, replacing the principle of general and abstract laws by a positivism which decided specific situations by specific laws, was also unsuccessful in curbing the turmoil following Word War I.

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[1] Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 124.

These failures combined with the individual's deep rooted immaturity, i.e., his blind obedience to authority, made possible the rise of National Socialism. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, a large segment of Protestantism welcomed the re-establishment of a strong central authority. However, the individual's blind obedience to authority allowed the Nazis to disregard completely the value and dignity of the individual person. Men were treated as means to an end either to be molded or destroyed at the will of the state. Since the Nazis had adopted the maxim of Liberalism: Right is Law (Recht ist Gesetz), any injustice could be legalized by law. The rule of the law became the tyranny of the law during the Third Reich. The authority of the law was lost and consequently man's respect for the law.

In a Rechtsstaat man's insight into the justness of the law compels him to obey the law. In a dictatorship, however, man's sense of freedom and dignity obligates him to disobey unjust laws which violate his natural rights.

Protestantism also adheres to the right of man to disobey authority by stressing the supreme value of the individual as God's creature. Luther's essay: "The Freedom of a Christian" is the basis on which Protestantism rests its claim, stated in the Augsburg Confession, that man should rather obey God than men. Luther wrote: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."[1] As an individual created by God the Christian is free and responsible only to God. As a member of the community of believers and as a social being, living in God-given orders in the world, the Christian is a servant of all, that is, he is responsible to and for others. Here is the origin of Bonhoeffer's notion of deputyship, the essence of his theory of mandates.

The freedom and the responsibility of the individual is thus the decisive element in the discussion of deputyship as a relation between authority and obedience or superiority and inferiority. Deputyship can only be understood by reference to Bonhoeffer's basic social category, the I-Thou relation. It may be recalled that Bonhoeffer derives the I-Thou relation from his notion of ethical transcendence, which reflects Luther's view of the freedom of the Christian man. According to Bonhoeffer, the individual comes into being as a moral person only through the ethical transcendence which exists between him and God and other men. Freedom thus characterizes the individual's status as an ultimate unit, while responsibility determines his existence as a social being. Though individual and social being are interdependent, freedom is the prerequisite of responsibility.

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[1] Martin Luther, Three Treatises (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 277.

Deputyship has been defined as man's responsibility to God and men. Deputyship is based on man's obedience to God's commandment revealed in the Scriptures. Consequently the authority of the Bible is the Christian's ultimate criterion guiding his life in the world. According to Luther, the freedom of the Christian entails not only his priesthood but also his responsibility to decide for himself whether to obey or disobey Obrigkeit.

While Luther's ordinances pertain to the social structure of a closed society in which man's place and function is predetermined, the mutual cooperation and limitation of Bonhoeffer's mandates reflects the flexibility of an open society. An open society is characterized by the competition among men which determines a man's station and thus responsibilities in life. The hierarchical structure within the mandates, therefore, does not mean the hierarchy of a static society, but the hierarchy of responsibility based on the accomplishments in his station in life.

To answer the question raised above, although a man may occupy the lowest station in life, he is still free to obey or disobey authority. The evangelical freedom of the Christian, Bonhoeffer maintains, allows even the breaking of God's law for the sake of responsible action. God who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of the world is more than the law. The freedom of the Christian man is in Luther's words "a spiritual and true freedom and makes our hearts free from all sins, laws and commands."[1]

The freedom of the Christian within the mandates is no less than the freedom of autonomous man. The ultimate source of the Christian's freedom is his obedience to and faith in God. The Christian's freedom to accept personal responsibility makes possible his obedience to and disobedience of authority. Authority is responsibility and responsibility is deputyship for God. In the mandates Christ's divine deputyship becomes man's deputyship. Deputyship as man's responsibility to God and man thus hallows the relation of authority and obedience within the mandates.

Deputyship, based on the individual's freedom and responsibility, thus links the theory of mandates with the world come of age. However, Bonhoeffer's emphasis of Christ's humanity does not base life on the Christian's *vocation* to overcome the world but on man's acceptance of personal responsibility for his action according to the principle of *suum cuique*.

The world come of age is a world in which faith and reason supplement each other. The mandates, based on man's freedom as a Christian and as a rational being, are still valid and relevant structures of life which make possible man's life of deputyship in a world come of age.

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 309.

One last but important problem remains to be considered, namely, the relationship between the dogmatic or theological root of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy and his notion of arcane discipline in a world come of age. The examination of this problem will serve to support the basic claim of the present evaluation that throughout his life Bonhoeffer was first and foremost a Lutheran theologian and that his social philosophy was basically an attempt to adopt Luther's social ethics to contemporary life.

To elucidate the notion of the dogmatic or theological root the following may be recalled. Bonhoeffer regards the investigation of the essential and original nature of sociality to be the task of social philosophy. The essential nature of sociality is to be found in the unity of spiritual and social life, while the original nature of sociality rests in man's spirituality. In Bonhoeffer's view, i.e., according to the Christian interpretation of history, the pure manifestations of man's spirituality and sociality existed as the community of love in pre-history, the primal state; they exist in history as the essential church, the sanctorum communio.

Bonhoeffer develops in his doctrine of the primal state the pure or eidetic forms of sociality as norms for man's existence in history. Though the original unity of man's spiritual and social life was destroyed in the Fall, the beginning of history, the external forms of sociality remained. The central event in history is the restoration of man's spiritual communion with God through Christ in the essential church, the sanctorum communio. The church as corpus Christi, therefore, is the true form or norm of man's sociality in history. Here the dogmatic or theological root of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy is to be found.

Can the concept of the essential church be accepted as a norm for sociality in a world come of age?

Bonhoeffer's view of the essential church as norm or criterion for judging historical men and communities has been criticized by H. Schmidt and P. L. Berger. Schmidt writes:

> Bonhoeffer ran the risk of supplying a Christian, Western conception of order, which had found its expression in the form of the church, with a value-stress which reached far beyond the justifiable limit; thus he erroneously bestowed upon it a normative and transhistorical meaning.[1]

Peter L. Berger deplores Bonhoeffer's failure to utilize empirical data in his discussion of the relationship between religion and society. "Despite Bonhoeffer's definitions," Berger writes, "his dialogue is actually one between social philosophy and dogmatic theology, both operating on levels of abstraction safely removed from the harshness of empirical data."[2]

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[1] World Come of Age, p. 219n.

[2] Peter Berger, "Sociology and Ecclesiology," in The Place of Bonhoeffer, ed. by Martin E. Marty (New York: Association Press, 1962), p. 59.

It should be noted that Schmidt and Berger refer in their critique of Bonhoeffer exclusively to the interpretation of the essential church as stated in *The Communion of Saints*. Is the criticism of Schmidt and Berger concerning the abstractness of the essential or normative church in history justified?

Any reader of *The Communion of Saints* must agree with Schmidt and Berger. The church described by Bonhoeffer as norm for empirical sociality is an abstraction which cannot be realized in actual reality. Bonhoeffer's view of the essential and empirical church is the result of his training in orthodox Protestant theology and not the product of a sociological inquiry. Bonhoeffer's selection of the starting point for his inquiry seems to be the reason for the abstractness of the essential or normative church in history. Bonhoeffer himself points out that he proceeds from the premises of dogmatic theology. In other words, his basis is the Christian interpretation of the relation between God and man from creation to eschaton, specifically, the interpretation of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer's Christocentrism is thus the source of his concept of the essential church as norm of sociality in history.

Bonhoeffer's emphasis of the distinction between the essential church, the *communio sanctorum*, and the fallen world, the *communio peccatorum*, certainly justifies the claims of Schmidt and Berger that Bonhoeffer's first work excels in abstractness.

The question arises, can the criticism of abstractness be maintained in the light of the whole body of Bonhoeffer's thought? Is Bonhoeffer's Christocentrism nothing more than a series of abstract principles, incapable of application to the existing realities of human experience? Was Bonhoeffer's quest for the presence of Christ carried out in isolation from the world? Is it necessarily the case that a dogmatic approach to the problem of man's relation to God and his existence in the world, i.e., a Christian interpretation of history, results in abstractions or norms for guiding the life of men which remain abstractions? In other words, did Bonhoeffer's concept of the essential or normative church remain an abstraction remote from the world?

The answer is to be found in Bonhoeffer's notion of reality. Christ comprises all reality. In Christ the reality of God and the reality of the world is united. Christ is the center of all reality, the unity of spiritual and social life. The concreteness of revelation establishes the oneness of reality, while Christ's death on the cross establishes the essential church, the place of man's acceptance by God, the norm for his worldly life.

Bonhoeffer emphasizes again and again in his writings the concreteness of the revelation and the unity of spiritual and social life. Christ as the center of reality is in the midst of the world and so is the essential church as the image of Christ guiding men towards their true destiny, the Kingdom of God.

Bonhoeffer's adherence to the Christian interpretation of history consequently leads him to express the eschatological goal of history, the unity of men with God, in the concept of the essential church. To preserve the knowledge of man's true destiny and thus the knowledge of the oneness of the reality of God and the reality of the world in Jesus Christ, Bonhoeffer insists on retaining an arcane discipline for the church in the world come of age. The maintaining of an arcane discipline for the empirical church in the world come of age thus substantiates the claim that the concept of the essential church still serves as norm for guiding the Christian's life in the world come of age.

It is not the fact that Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the God-man Jesus Christ changes throughout his life, the crucial fact concerning Bonhoeffer's thought is that Christ remains always at the center of reality. Consequently, it is the notion of the oneness of reality in Christ which changes the abstractness and thus inapplicability of the concept of the essential church of The Communion of Saints to its applicability as a norm in the concreteness of life in a world come of age. The concept of the essential church and the notion of arcane discipline belong together. The arcane discipline of the church in a world come of age closes the circle of Bonhoeffer's quest for the presence of Christ which began with the formula: Christ existing as the church. One must therefore agree with W. Hamilton's remark that the world come of age "receives as 'religious' an interpretation as one can conceive."[1]

The retention of an arcane discipline for the church in a world come of age proves that Bonhoeffer's evaluation of history is still nourished from its dogmatic or theological root; it is a biblical interpretation of history. In Bonhoeffer's view, therefore, autonomous man and the world come of age are still oriented towards the Kingdom of God.

Christocentrism is the key to Bonhoeffer's thought. The exclusiveness and the totality of Christ in Bonhoeffer's thought does not allow any alternative other than the acceptance or rejection of his Christocentrism. E. Bethge comments in defense of Bonhoeffer's Christ-centered interpretation of history:

> Bonhoeffer believed that the declaration 'coming of age,' in close connection with and deriving from his faith in the presence of the Crucified One, prevents the blessing from becoming a cheap adjustment to modern man. Christology protects man come of age from deifying or demonizing his secularity again, and from falling into hopeless skepticism.[2]

Bonhoeffer, the contemporary, living in the world etsi deus non daretur, recognized that the unity of human life cannot be based on the principle of man's autonomy alone. Bonhoeffer, the Christian, experienced in Christ God's participation in man's suffering in the world. Bonhoeffer, the theologian, therefore retained the holiness of God's Word to the world in the arcane discipline of the church.

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[1] World Come of Age, p. 155.

[2] Bethge, "Bonhoeffer's Christology and His 'Religionless Christianity'," p. 69.

Bonhoeffer's social philosophy, based on his interpretation of life and history from the perspective of God's revelation in Christ, provides in the mandates the framework for man's free and responsible action in the world. Christ, the mediator, uniting the reality of God and the reality of the world, is the summum bonum of Bonhoeffer's social philosophy and man's absolute criterion for determining his actions in life. Personal faith in Christ and personal responsibility to Christ characterize the Christian as autonomous man in Bonhoeffer's social philosophy.

Epilogue

What is Bonhoeffer's significance today? Bonhoeffer's writings in general may be criticized for its exclusive Christocentrism. In other words, Bonhoeffer's total adherence to a theological interpretation of life and history leaves no room for a consideration of the contributions of the social and natural sciences concerning man's existence in the world. Considering theology as a branch and not as the totality of human knowledge about reality, Bonhoeffer's writings may justifiably be regarded as one-sided or "abstract" in the true sense of the word. However, as has been pointed out before, Bonhoeffer's lifelong quest for the presence of

Christ in the world resulted in his unshakeable faith and conviction that the dualism of God and the world had been overcome in Jesus Christ. Christ is the center of all reality.

Bonhoeffer's theory of mandates, the core of his Christian social philosophy, may be criticized for its authoritarian point of view. The internal structure of the mandates with its distinction between superiority or authority and inferiority or obedience derives from the Lutheran conception of the relation between God and man which is based on dependent man's obedience to God the Father.

Bonhoeffer's contribution and thus his significance for contemporary Christianity rests on the fact that he replaces the traditional one-sided conception of a transcendent and omnipotent God by a new conception of God whose transcendence is His descendence. The transcendent God is the _deus absconditus_, while the present God is the _Christus praesens_. Thus God is simultaneously other than man and present for man.

Bonhoeffer expresses in the notion of the oneness of all reality the presence of the supernatural in the natural and of the sacred in the profane. While Bonhoeffer's _theologia gloriae_ regards the incarnation as the symbol of God's unity with the world, Bonhoeffer's _theologia crucis_ emphasizes the cross of Christ as the place of God's presence in the world. Bonhoeffer's _theologia crucis_ thus centers upon God's love for the world exemplified by Christ's vicarious action for mankind.

In Bonhoeffer's view the revelation of God in Christ is not only a concrete but also the decisive event in history. Consequently Christ's vicarious action or deputyship determines Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Christian life in the world. The summum bonum and absolute criterion for Christian thought and action, individually and collectively, is responsibility to Christ. The prerequisite of responsibility is freedom. The freedom of the Christian as an individual is the absolute freedom of man as a creature of God; the freedom of the Christian as a social being is determined by his responsibility to God and other men. Bonhoeffer's view of the Christian life and thus his social philosophy is characterized by the interdependence of individual and social being, based on faith in and responsibility to God.

Bonhoeffer's most important contribution, the affirmation of the supreme value of life as responsibility, is best stated in his own words: "That is the conclusion of the idea of life as responsibility, as being bound to history and community, that life has right only through self-sacrifice."[1] The freedom and responsibility of the Christian requires the venture of the personal decision to take upon himself the risk of self-sacrifice for the sake of Christ.

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[1] Gesammelte Schriften, III, p. 266. (translation mine) German text previously cited, see p. 95.

Bonhoeffer's own life proves best the unity of his thought and action. For the sake of Christ Bonhoeffer was willing to risk and accept the supreme sacrifice. His death bears witness to a life which steadfastly adhered to St Paul's admonition: "Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."[1]

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[1] I Cor. 16:13.

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Vita

I, Karl Heinz Wedemeyer, son of Karl and Charlotte Wedemeyer, was born on September 9, 1919, in Oldenburg, Germany. I attended the Staatliches Kaiser Wilhelms-Gymnasium in Wilhelmshaven, from which I graduated in 1937. From 1937 to 1945 I served in the Reichsarbeitsdienst (German Labor Service) and in the German Army. After the war I studied electrical engineering at the Technische Berufsschule in Wilhelmshaven and graduated in 1948. From 1948 to 1952 I worked as a private contractor.

I came to the United States in October, 1952, and worked as a draftsman and machine engraver. I became a U.S. citizen in 1957. In the spring of 1956 I entered the College of Liberal Arts of Boston University. I graduated in 1958 magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Germanic Languages and Literature as well as in Philosophy. I was also elected a member of Phi Beta Kappa. I continued my studies in Germanic Languages and Literature at Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, from which I received a Master of Arts degree in June, 1959. From 1959 to 1962 I worked in the Patent Department, Foreign Section, of the United Shoe Machinery Corporation, Boston. I was admitted as a Ph. D. candidate by the Graduate School of Boston University in September, 1962. From 1962 to the present I have worked as a translator and proofreader on a part-time basis.